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THIRTY YEARS OF PARIS

·DAUDET·

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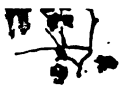

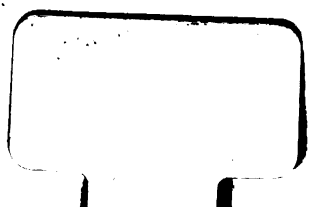

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ALPHONSE DAUDET

From a Water-Colour by L. ROSSI

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Thirty Years of Paris

and

Of my Literary Life

With Illustrations by

Bieler, Montégut, Myrbach, Picard, and Rossi

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Alphonse Daudet

Thirty Years of Paris

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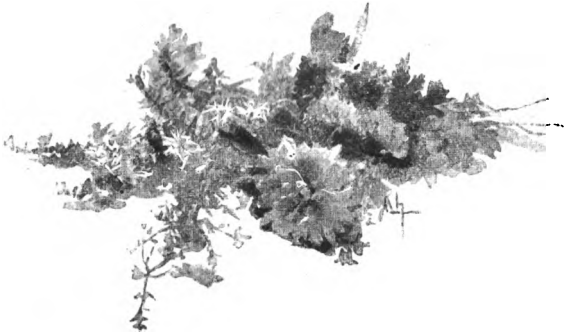

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THE ARRIVAL.

WHAT a journey it was! At the mere recollection of it, after thirty years, I can again feel the sensation of cramp, and again my legs seem to be imprisoned in fetters of ice. For two days I was cooped up in a third-class carriage, in light summer clothing, in bitterly cold weather!

I was just sixteen; I came from far away, from the furthest corner of Languedoc, where I had been usher in a school. I was coming to Paris, in order to devote myself to literary

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work! When I had paid my railway fare, I was left with the exact sum of forty sous in my pocket!

But why should I be worried or anxious? Was I not rich in anticipation? I even forgot to be hungry, notwithstanding the tempting array of tarts and sandwiches which decked the buffets at the railway stations; I was determined not to change that precious coin carefully hidden away in the innermost recesses of my pocket. However, towards the end of our journey, when our train, groaning and tossing us from side to side, was bearing us across the dreary plains of the flat Champagne country, I very nearly fainted. My travelling companions, sailors, who had been whiling away the time with singing, offered me a flask. What fine fellows! How harmonious seemed their rude ditties! and how good their rough brandy to one who had not tasted food for eight and forty hours!

It saved and reinvigorated me, and, overcome by fatigue, I leant back and dozed off. A sleep, however, broken by periodical awakenings when the train stopped, and

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painfully resumed when it had started again. . . . .

At last, a sound of wheels clanking on the turn-tables, a gigantic glass dome overhead blazing with light, doors banging, luggage vans clattering on the pavement, a restless busy crowd, customhouse officers—in fact, Paris.

My brother was waiting for me on the platform, a knowing, sharp, practical fellow, in spite of his youth, and fully alive to the importance of his duties as an elder brother, he had secured a hand-cart and engaged a *commissionaire.*

"He will carry away your luggage."

It was a load that luggage! A poor little trunk studded with nails, patched all over, and weighing more in itself than all its contents. We started off in the direction of the Quartier Latin, along the deserted quay, through the slumbering streets, walking behind the porter, who was pushing the hand-barrow. It was scarcely daylight, we only met some workmen, their faces blue with cold, or newspaper hawkers, who were cleverly slipping the morning papers beneath

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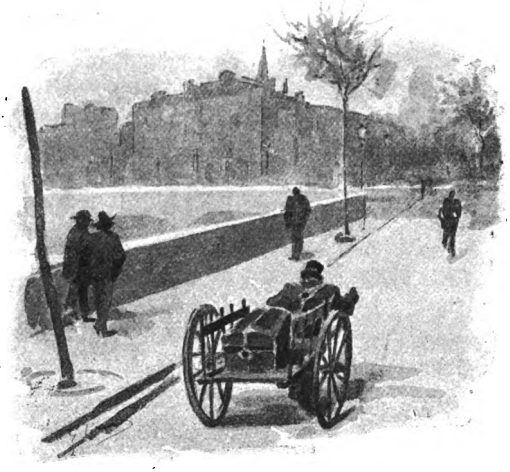
the house doors. The gas lamps were extinguished, and the streets—the Seine being at its highest—all appeared to me gloomy through the grey morning mist. Such was



my entry into Paris. Clinging to my brother, my heart full of anxiety, I experienced a feeling of involuntary terror while we continued steadily following the cart.

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"If you are not in too great a hurry to see our room, we will breakfast first," said Ernest.

"Oh yes, by all means."

I was literally dying of hunger.

But alas! the coffee tavern, one in the rue de Corneille, was not yet opened; and we had to wait a long time, trying to keep ourselves warm by walking about the neighbourhood, and round the Odéon, which impressed me by its huge roof, its portico, and its temple-like appearance.

At length the shutters were flung back and a sleepy-looking waiter admitted us, noisily dragging his loose slippers across the floor and muttering to himself, very much in the way that stable-men do when awakened from

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their sleep to put to the relays. Never shall I forget that breakfast in the dawning light. I have but to close my eyes for the whole scene to reappear before me. The bare white-washed walls, dotted with rows of pegs, the bar covered with piles of napkins rolled in their rings, marble tables without table-cloths, but scrupulously clean, glasses, salt-cellars, and tiny flasks filled with wine, in which there was not a drop of grape juice, but which to me appeared excellent—all these were already in their places.

"Three sous of coffee" the waiter called out on his own responsibility directly he saw us, and as at this early hour there was no one else but himself in the place, he answered "Boum" to himself, and brought us "*three of coffee*," that is to say, three sous worth of delicious, fragrant coffee, tolerably sweet: which soon vanished, as well as two small loaves that he had brought in a little basket.

We then ordered an omelette, for it was too early to be able to get a cutlet.

"An omelette for two."

"Boum," bellowed the waiter.

"And well done!" cried my brother.

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I was overcome with respectful emotion at the coolness and lordly airs of my sybarite of a brother. And at dessert, eyes fixed upon eyes, elbows on the table, what schemes, what confidences, did we not exchange, as we sat with a plateful of raisins and nuts before us! He who has well dined is a better man! Away with melancholy and anxiety; this simple breakfast had intoxicated me as much as champagne.

We sallied forth arm in arm, talking at the top of our voices. By that time it was broad daylight. Paris beamed upon me through her open shop windows; the Odéon itself seemed to nod affably towards me; and the white marble queens in the gardens of the Luxembourg, that I caught sight of through the railings in the midst of the leafless branches, appeared to bow graciously and welcome my arrival. My brother was rich! He filled the post of secretary to an old gentleman who was dictating his memoirs and gave him a salary of seventy-five francs a month. Till I should win my laurels, we had to live on these seventy-five francs a month, and to share the tiny room on the fifth floor, almost a garret, in the

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Hôtel du Sénat, rue de Tournon, which however seemed to me a palace. A Parisian attic! The mere sight of those words "*Hôtel du Sénat*" staring in big letters on the front of the house, flattered my conceit, and dazzled my mind. Opposite the hotel, on the other side of the street, there was an old house, dating from the last century, with a pediment and two reclining figures, which always gave me the impression that they were about to fall from off the wall into the street below.

"That is where Ricord lives, said my brother, the famous Ricord, the Emperor's physician."

The Hôtel du Sénat! the Emperor's doctor! These grand words delighted me and tickled my vanity. Oh, those first impressions of Paris.

The large restaurants of the Boulevard St. Michel, the new buildings on the boulevard

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St. Germain and in the rue des Écoles had not yet driven away the studious youth of the Quartier Latin, and in spite of its high sounding name, our hotel in the rue de Tournon did not pique itself on its senatorial gravity.

There was quite a colony of students there,

a horde from the south of Gascony, fine fellows, slightly vain-glorious and self sufficient, but jovial withal, great beer drinkers and palaverers, who filled the staircase and passages with the deep tones of their sonorous bass voices. They spent their time in empty talk and endless argument. We

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seldom met them, only on Sundays, and then by chance; that is to say, when our purses allowed us the luxury of a dinner at the *table d'hôte.*

It was there that I first saw Gambetta. He was even then the man we have all known and admired. Rejoicing in life; rejoicing in talk; this loquacious Roman grafted on a Gallic stock, intoxicated himself with the jingle of his own phrases, making the window panes vibrate with the noise of his thundering eloquence, most frequently ending in exuberant explosions of mirth. Already he reigned supreme over the mass of his comrades. In the Quartier Latin, he was an important personality, all the more so that he received three hundred francs a month from Cahors—an enormous sum for a student in those remote days. Later on we became intimate, but at that time I was only a raw provincial lad, new to Paris, and I was satisfied to sit at the further end of the table and contemplate him from afar with a feeling of admiration unclouded by the faintest shadow of envy.

Both he and his friends were wholly ab-

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sorbed in politics, and from the Quartier Latin, they were already laying siege to the Tuileries, while my tastes and ambition were directed towards other conquests. A literary life was the sole object of my dreams. Sustained by the boundless confidence of youth, poor but radiant, I passed the whole year in my attic, versifying.

It is an ordinary and touching story. Paris can reckon hundreds of poor young fellows, possessors of no other fortune than a few rhymes; but I do not imagine that any one ever began his career in destitution more complete than mine.

With the exception of my brother, I knew nobody. Short-sighted, awkward, and timid, whenever I stole forth from my garret, I invariably wandered round the Odéon, strolling beneath its arcades, overcome by fear and joy at the idea that I might meet some literary character—near Mme. Gaut's shop, for instance. Mme. Gaut, already an old woman, but with astounding eyes, brilliant and black, allowed me to glance over the new works exposed for sale, on condition that I did not cut the leaves.

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Often I saw her conversing with the great novelist, Barbey d'Aurevilly, and while she knitted a stocking, the author of *Une Vieille Maîtresse* stood before her with his hand

on his hips, *à la Mérovingienne*, the end of his waggoner's cloak, lined with handsome black velvet, thrown over his shoulder, so that all might behold the richness of the apparently unpretending garment.

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Some one approaches, 'tis Vallès. The future Communist passed nearly every day in front of Madame Gaut's establishment, on

returning from the reading room of "la Mère Morel," where it was his daily habit to go betimes in the morning to work and read. Cynical, caustic and eloquent, always arrayed

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in the same old frock coat, he spoke in a harsh, metallic voice, apparently issuing from the depths of a rough, bristling beard, which, reaching nearly to the eyebrows, enveloped his sombre Auvergnat physiognomy. This voice grated on my nerves. He had recently written *L'Argent*, a pamphlet dedicated to Mirès, and illustrated in vignette form with a design representing a five franc piece; and while waiting to become the associate of Mirès, he was the inseparable companion of the old critic, Gustave Planche. The Aristarchus of the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* was at that time a ponderous old man of stern mien, an inflated Philoctetes, with a shuffling and limping gait. One day I had the audacity to play the spy upon them from a window of the café of the Rue Taranne, by raising myself up to the casement and rubbing the pane with my fingers; it was the café next to the house—now demolished—in which Diderot lived for forty years. They were seated facing each other, Vallès gesticulating vehemently, and Planche rapidly emptying a small flask of brandy—tossing down glass after glass.

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Neither can I forget Cressot, the easy-tempered, eccentric Cressot, whom Vallès has since rendered immortal in his *Réfractaires!* How often I saw him gliding through the streets of the Quartier Latin, with his sad and suffering face, and his thin, lanky form shrouded in a short cloak.

Cressot was the author of *Antonia*, a poem. No one knew how the poor devil subsisted. One fine day however a friend in the provinces left him a small annuity: that day Cressot dined,—and died of it.

Yet another face of this period is also graven on my memory; that of Jules de la Madelène one of the best *poetæ minores* of our prose literature, the author of works too little known, which excel by the beauty of their truly classical style: the *Âmes en Peine* and *Le Marquis de Saffras.* Of aristocratic manners, and a blonde type of head, recalling by its delicate and somewhat pallid features, Tintoretto's *Christ*, his eyes seemed always full of sadness, and longing for the warm sun of his native country, Provence. The romance of his life was told in whispers: 'twas that of an enthusiast, and a brave scion

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of good family. Severely wounded on the barricades in June, 1848, he had been left for dead amongst the fallen insurgents. Picked up by a tradesman, he remained concealed in the house of his rescuer, whose family nursed him devotedly till he was restored to health, when he married the daughter of his host.

To meet these celebrated men, and perchance exchange a few words with them, was sufficient to fire me with ambition, and I boldly exclaimed "I too will be famous!"

With what impetuous eagerness I rushed up the five flights of stairs,—especially when I had managed to buy a candle which enabled me to work all night, and by the

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light of its flickering flame, elaborate verses, and sketch out dramas, covering innumerable sheets of paper in endless succession. Audacity lent me wings; I saw a magnificent future opening before me, I forgot my pov-

erty; I forgot my privations; as on that well-remembered Christmas Eve when I, rapidly penning my rhymes, heard far below me the noisy festivities of the students, amongst whom dominated the voice of Gambetta,

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thundering through the hall and re-echoing along the passages, causing even my frozen window-panes to vibrate.

But once in the streets, all my former fears returned.

The Odéon in particular filled me with awe. During the whole of that year it seemed to remain as frigid, as imposing and inaccessible as it had first appeared to me on the day of my arrival. Odéon! Mecca that I yearned for, object of my secret aspirations, how often did I repeat my timid and ineffectual attempts to cross the sacred threshold of the small low doorway through which thine artists entered!

How often did I watch Tisserand in all his glory pass through that portal, rounding his shoulders under his cloak in the awkward and careless fashion affected by Frédérick Lemaître! After him, arm in arm with Flaubert, and as like him as a brother, came Louis Bouilhet, the author of *Madame de Montarcy;* followed frequently by Count d'Osmoy, now a deputy. They were at that time writing together, a grand fantastic piece, which however was never produced on the

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stage. Behind them again, all cast in the same dragoon mould, adorned with fair moustachios, came a group of four or five gigantic Normans. This was the cohort from Rouen, Bouilhet's faithful lieutenants, who applauded to order, the first representations of his plays.

Then Amédée Rolland, Jean Duboys and Bataille followed on, a younger, more enterprising and daring trio; striving also to enter by that little door, under the ample shelter of Tisserand's cloak.

All three, like Bouilhet, died at the outset of their literary career, and thus it is that the arcades of the Odéon, as I wander through them in the twilight are to me peopled with friendly shades.

However, having completed a small volume of poems, I went the round of the publishers. I called on Michel Lévy, on Hachette. Where did I not venture! I stole in and out of all the large publishing offices, vast as cathedrals, and in which, notwithstanding the carpets, the creaking of my boots made a terrible noise. Clerks with bureaucratic airs stared at me in a chilling and consequential manner.

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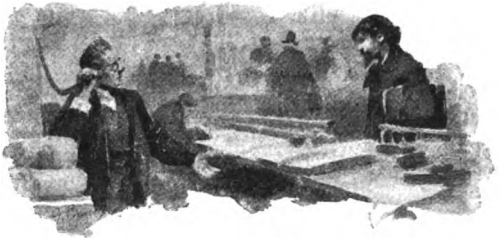
"Could I see M. Lévy?—about a manuscript."

"I will see, sir. Kindly give me your name."

On hearing the name, the clerk methodically put his lips to one of the speaking tubes and applied his ear to the other.

"M. Lévy is not in."

M. Lévy never was in, neither was M.



Hachette; no one ever was in, and always thanks to that odious speaking tube.

The Librairie Nouvelle, in the Boulevard des Italiens, still remained for me to try. There I found no speaking tube, no official staff—nothing of the kind. The publisher Jacotet, who was then starting his new series of little volumes at one franc apiece—an

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idea of his own—was a short, small man, reminding one of Balzac, but without Balzac's noble brow; constantly in motion, overwhelmed by business and dinner-parties, and

continually planning some vast scheme. His money burnt in his pockets. In a couple of years this restless activity brought him to bankruptcy, and he left France to found the newspaper *L'Italia*, on the other side of the

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Alps. His establishment was the rendezvous for all the choice intellects of the boulevards, and here might be seen Noriac, who had just published his 101^e *Régiment;* Scholl, happy and proud at the success of his *Denise;* Adolphe Gaiffe and Aubryet. All these frequenters of the boulevards, irreproachably "got up," gossiping about women and money, made me feel shy and awkward when I caught sight of my own figure, reflected amongst theirs, in the glass of the shop windows, with my hair as long as a *pifferaro's*, and my little Provençal headgear. As for Jacotet, he was constantly making appointments to meet me at three o'clock at the Maison d'Or.

"We will talk over matters," he would say, "and sign our agreement on the corner of the table."

What a humbug! I hardly knew where his Maison d'Or was! Nevertheless my brother encouraged me a good deal when I returned home on the verge of despair.

One evening however I was the bearer of a grand piece of news and a great joy! The *Spectateur*, a legitimist paper, had agreed

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to test my talents as a journalist. It is easy to fancy with what affection and tender care I wrote my first article, bestowing a scrupulous attention even on the caligraphic part of the work! I carried it to the office, it was read, approved of, and sent to the printers. I waited breathlessly for the number to appear. Suddenly Paris was turned upside down! Some Italians had fired at the Emperor.

Paris was immediately terrorized, the papers were prosecuted, and the *Spectateur* suppressed. Orsini's bomb had blown up my article!

I did not kill myself, but I thought of suicide. Heaven, however, kindly took pity on my woes, and I discovered the publisher whom I had so long sought for far and near, at my very door. It was Tardieu, the publisher in the rue de Tournon.

Himself a literary man, his compositions, *Mignon*, and *Pour une Épingle*, written in sentimental sugar and water style, had met with some success. I made his acquaintance by accident one evening when he happened to seat himself in front of his shop, while I

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was loitering about near our hotel. He published my *Amoureuses.*

The title was attractive, the volume prettily got up. Both my production and myself were noticed by the papers, and now all my shyness seemed to vanish.

I boldly walked about under the arcades of the Odéon, watching how the sale of my book progressed, and still more audacious, at the end of a few days I even ventured to speak to Jules Vallès. I had appeared in print.

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VILLEMESSANT.[1]

I GO sometimes, when my personal requirements and the direction of my walks chance to coincide, and have my beard trimmed or my hair cut at Lespès. A very interesting and truly Parisian nook is this large barber's shop, occupying the entire angle of the Maison Frascati, between the rue Vivienne and the Boulevard Montmartre. As patrons, Lespès

[1] Written in 1879.

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had "all Paris", that is to say, that infinitesimal number of Parisians, whose existence begins and ends with the Gymnase and the Opera, Notre Dame de Lorette, and the Bourse, and who fancy that they alone exist! Then he had the stockbrokers, the actors, the journalists, without reckoning the innumerable legion of busy, fussy idlers and frequenters of the Boulevards. Twenty or thirty barbers are in constant work, curling and shaving all day.

Superintending everything, keeping a sharp eye on the razors and pomatum pots, continually moving from room to room, Lespès, the proprietor, is a small, vivacious man, who, his fortune made (and he is very wealthy), would have grown fat, were it not that a certain disappointed ambition keeps him in a continual state of fever. It was in this house, really predestined, that, twenty years ago, in the very *entresol* where Lespès carries on his business, the *Figaro* had its offices. Here was the lobby, the subscription room, the cashier's office, where from behind a wire grating peered the round eyes and sharp beak of old Legendre, always irritable,

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seldom amiable, like a parrot turned cashier. Here was the editorial room, with "No admittance except on business" written on the ground glass of the door, and inside, a few chairs ranged round a large table covered with an immense green cloth. I can still see it all, and can see myself, timidly sitting in a corner, hugging under my arm my first article, rolled and tied up with tender and affectionate care. Villemessant had not yet returned. They had told me to wait, and I was waiting. On that occasion there were about half-a-dozen men seated round the green clothed table, skimming the papers, or scribbling. They were laughing and talking, smoking cigarettes, and matters were being merrily discussed. Amongst them was a small man with a red face, and white hair brushed up on end, making him look like a cockatoo.

This was M. Paul d'Ivoy, the celebrated chronicler, who had been enticed away from the *Courrier de Paris* regardless of cost—Paul d'Ivoy, whose fabulously large remuneration (it was fabulous at that time, but would not appear so now) made him the admiration

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of all the literary circles. He wrote with a smile upon his face, like a man thoroughly pleased with himself: the slips of paper grew black under his pen, and I sat by, watching M. Paul d'Ivoy smiling and writing.

All at once there was a sound of heavy footsteps, and a thickened, jovial voice:

"Villemessant!" Instantly the pens scratched away, the laughter ceased, and the cigarettes were hidden, Paul d'Ivoy alone raised his head and dared to gaze familiarly upon their imposing deity.

VILLEMESSANT: "That's right, my children, I see that you are all hard at work." (*To*

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Paul d'Ivoy in a good-natured manner): "Are you satisfied with your article?"

PAUL D'IVOY: "I think it will do."

VILLEMESSANT: "Well so much the better, that is lucky, for it will be your last."

PAUL D'IVOY (*turning pale*): "My last?"

VILLEMESSANT: Certainly! I am not laugh-

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ing—your writings are most tedious—there is but one opinion on the Boulevards—you have bored us long enough."

Paul d'Ivoy had risen from his chair: "But our agreement, sir?—Our agreement?"

"That's a good joke! Just try and bring an action against me—that would be fun: I should read aloud your contributions in open court, and we should soon see if any agreement could compel me to insert such rubbish in my paper!" Villemessant was quite capable of carrying out his threat, and Paul d'Ivoy never went to law. All the same, this way of shaking off his officials with as little ceremony as an old carpet out of a window, gave poor innocent me cold shivers! I began to wish both myself and my hapless manuscript, so ridiculously rolled up, a hundred feet under-ground. I never entirely got over that first impression; after this I often met Villemessant, and he was always most kind, but I invariably felt on seeing him the same cold shudder of painful terror that Hop o' my Thumb must have experienced on first meeting the Giant.

To be quite fair, I am bound to add that

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when in after days, this same Paul d'Ivoy,—so summarily dismissed—died, it was Villemessant, real ogre and St. Vincent de Paul in one, who voluntarily provided for the education of his children.

Was he kind or was he cruel? It is a puzzling question, and Diderot's comedy seems to have been written on him. Kind, he certainly was, and cruel too, according to his passing fancy; and a painter might, without falsifying a line, or a shade, have drawn two portraits of him: one kind and benevolent, the other harsh and cruel; one all black, the other all bright and rose-coloured, which, though bearing no resemblance to each other, would both be an excellent likeness of the original.

In relating characteristic anecdotes of this singularly dual nature, the only difficulty which arises, proceeds from their excessive variety.

Before the war, I had made the acquaintance of a good honest man, father of a family, a clerk at the Central Post Office, rue Jean Jacques Rousseau. When the commune broke out, he remained in Paris,

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Possibly there lurked in the secret recesses of his heart a weakness for the insurrection, of that I cannot feel sure. Perhaps he said to himself that after all, as letters would continue

to arrive in Paris, some one must sort and distribute them; that is perfectly probable. It may have been that, encumbered with a wife and grown up daughters, a sudden exit was not within his means. At that moment Paris

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could reckon many a poor devil in a similar position, barricaders through the force of circumstances, insurgents without knowing

wherefore. However that may have been, notwithstanding M. Thiers' orders, my friend remained at this work, behind his grating,

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methodically sorting his letters amid the noise of battle, as if nothing unusual were happening; but he absolutely refused to accept any promotion or increase of pay from the Commune. Nevertheless, when the Commune was put down, he was dismissed, and —too thankful to escape being tried by court-martial—found himself thrown destitute on the streets, when on the very eve of obtaining a pension. Henceforth an existence at once sad and comical began for him. He had not dared to inform his family of his dismissal; each morning his daughters prepared a clean starched shirt for him (a government official must be neat!), carefully and merrily, as in former days, tied the bow of his cravat, and kissed him at the door as they bid him good-bye at the usual hour, fancying he was going to his office. His office! Ah, now far away was that office! so cool in the hot summer, so well warmed in the cold winter—that office where the time used to pass so peacefully. Now he was obliged to tramp all over Paris through rain and snow seeking an employment he could never find, and on his return home in the evening sad

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and depressed, he was obliged to tell falsehoods; to invent stories about an imaginary sub-director, and a phantasmagoric office boy, and to relate them all in a cheerful and facetious manner. (I made use of this poor fellow for the character of Père Joyeuse in my novel the *Nabob*, who, in search of a situation, also tells falsehoods to his daughters.) I met him sometimes. It was heartrending. His destitute condition decided me to try an appeal to Villemessant. I thought, Villemessant can surely find him some little corner in the *Figaro* office. But it was impossible; every place was filled. And then a communist! Fancy if it were discovered that he, Villemessant, was employing a communist in his office! Nevertheless, the story of the daughters, the white shirts, the cravat bows, had, it seemed, softened the heart of the good-natured ogre.

"Stop," he exclaimed; "how much did your *protégé* receive a month?"

"Two hundred francs."

"Well then, I will remit to you two hundred francs a month for him until he finds a situation. He will be able to keep up the

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appearance of going to his office, his daughters will continue to tie his cravats." And he wound up his speech with his everlasting phrase, "What a good joke!"

It was indeed a capital joke; for three months the poor fellow continued to draw this little sum. At length he succeeded in finding a place, and he economized so steadily, and denied himself so vigorously, that one fine morning he brought me back the six hundred francs, and a beautiful letter of thanks for M. Villemessant, whose name I had revealed to him, and whom, notwithstanding the difference of their political views, he persisted in calling his benefactor. I carried it all to Villemessant.

"What a good joke! I gave him the money, and he wants to return it. This is the first time such a thing has happened to me. And a communard too; what a capital joke!"

Then followed exclamations, laughter, enthusiasm, and Villemessant, delighted, threw himself back in his arm-chair. But what ensued vividly paints the man. Happy and radiant, both on account of the kind action he had performed, and the natural

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pleasure felt, by even the most sceptical, on finding he has neither been duped nor yet obliged a thankless fellow, Villemessant, while talking, continued to pile up the six hundred francs, arranging them in six little heaps on the table. Suddenly, he turned towards me.

"I say, Daudet, there are five francs wanting!"

Five francs were indeed missing; one unfortunate tiny gold-piece had been forgotten in the lining of my pocket. In the midst of his enthusiasm, the man of business cropped up. Such is the complex character of this man, who, in reality, reflective, and very shrewd, hides these qualities under an appearance of impulsive good nature which would almost persuade one to believe that the poles could meet, that Toulouse is close to Blois, and that the turrets of Chambord are reflected in the waters of the Garonne.

In public as well as in private life, Villemessant had set up familiarity as a principle to be exercised towards others—be it understood—for he exacted great respect directly he himself was concerned. On the

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morrow of one of those biting articles, which he was in the habit of adding to the paper at the very last moment, when it was actually going to press, Villemessant was summoned to the Presidency of the *Corps legislatif* (this was under the Empire). If I am not mistaken, it was *à propos* of the famous article, '*Morny est dans l'affaire*' (Morny is implicated) which most old Boulevardiers will remember. The Duke was, or pretended to be, very angry, but our friend from Blois was not to be disconcerted.

"What, Monsieur le Duc, is it possible you have not sent for me to decorate me! The orderly you sent, with his large sealed envelope and his helmet, may boast that he gave me a famous thrill of emotion. My staff are already thinking of illuminations. This time it is a good joke!" And then he quickly poured forth stories, anecdotes and repartees without end, all thoroughly Parisian, accompanied by a hearty laugh, then a pretended air of concern, and a real and visible pleasure in repeating—"Monsieur le Duc!" and so the grievance was forgiven.

Elsewhere, at de Persigny's, for instance,

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his familiarity did not meet with such success, and Villemessant one day found his facetious buffoonery, frozen by the chilly official atmosphere, fall flat and pointless. But Morny delighted in him, and forgave him everything. Thanks to his sovereign protection, the *Figaro* was able to play a thousand freaks. Then, too, what respect, what veneration they had for the President. I knew the time when they would have been capable of building a little chapel in the thickness of the walls of the editorial office, as to a protecting deity, a kind of Lares. However, all this did not prevent the *Figaro* from publishing one morning, in a most conspicuous place, *à propos* of a theatrical piece of M. de Saint Remy (the name with which the Duke signed his literary efforts), an article written by Henri Rochefort, as corrosive and biting as any acid, painful and irritating as a hundred needles forgotten in an arm-chair.

"What spite has this Rochefort against me? I have never done him any harm!" said the Duke with that artless vanity from which even the wiliest of statesmen are not always exempt, once they have put pen to paper;

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and Villemessant putting on a contrite air, exclaimed,

"This is shocking! Had I been there, such an article would never have been allowed to go to press. You see how grieved I am. But that day—as luck would have it—I never went near the office. The scoundrels have taken advantage of my absence. I never even saw the proofs."

The Duke might think what he pleased of this apology, but the article made a sensation. People eagerly read it, and bought it. Villemessant did not wish for anything better.

It is easy to see by the above anecdote (and this was the basis of the unity of this nature, in appearance so diverse and contradictory,) that Villemessant was above all devoted, body and soul, to his paper. After the first cautious experiments of *début*, after a few broadsides, fired somewhat at haphazard, hither and thither, after trying every point of the compass, once the right road found, he travelled undeviatingly along it, never for a moment allowing himself to be diverted from his course. His newspaper had become his life.

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The man and his work resembled each other, and no one, it may well be said, was ever more exactly fitted for the measure of his destiny. Wonderfully active, energetic, restless, overwhelming others by his huge presence ; temperate too, as was then the

fashion (incredible as this may appear to the present generation) ; never drinking, nor smoking, fearing neither arguments, blows, nor adventures, unscrupulous at heart, always ready to throw overboard any prejudices, and never having had any sincere political creed,

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he was yet fond of displaying a Platonic and respectable legitimist attachment, as being that which he considered the best style. Villemessant was indeed the captain fitted to command the daring pirate craft, which for twenty years, under cover of the royal lily-sprinkled flag, sailed chiefly on its own account.

He was tyrannical and capricious, but beneath the surface it was the interest of his paper which always ruled the why and wherefore of this tyranny and caprice. In the year of grace 1858, we may see him at the Café des Variétés, or the Café Véron, on a Thursday morning at about eleven o'clock. The *Figaro* has just appeared. Villemessant is breakfasting. He gossips, relates anecdotes, which he will introduce into the next issue if they are laughed at; and will forget immediately, if they fall flat. He listens, and asks questions. "What do you think of *So and So's* article?—Charming.—Clever, is it not?—Wonderfully talented!" Villemessant returns beaming to the office. "Where is *So and So?* Tell him to come to me! Wonderfully talented! There is no one like him! All Paris is talking of his article."

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And then *So and So* is congratulated, made much of, and his salary raised. Four days later, at the same table the same guest pronounces the same *So and So's* article to be tedious, and Villemessant hurries up again to the office, no longer beaming, but furiously angry; and this time, instead of increasing the pay, settles and closes the account.

No doubt it was one of these post-prandial consultations that brought about the scene between Villemessant and Paul d'Ivoy, which so scandalized my youthful ingenuousness.

A writer more or less mattered little to Villemessant!

When one was dismissed, another was easily found, and the latest comer was always the best. According to him every one has an embryo article lying dormant in his brain, and the only question is what shall call it forth. Monselet has founded upon this a delightful story. "Villemessant meets a chimney-sweep in the street, carries him off to the office of the *Figaro*, has him washed, sets him down before some paper, and says to him 'Write'! The sweep writes, and the article is thought charming." 'Tis thus that

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"All Paris" that can wield the pen, whether famous or unknown, has moved across the pages of the *Figaro.* In this manner many a worthy fellow, finding renewed in his favour, the history of the Quatrain of St. Aulaire, has had, owing to a happy inspiration of some fifteen lines, his brief moment of celebrity. If the miracle was not repeated, these ephemeral writers were pronounced "used up"! and "used-up" by Villemessant. I have known Paris quite filled with the battalions of the used-up. Ingenuous epoch! when fifteen lines was supposed to have "used one up."

Not that Villemessant despised literature, on the contrary! Only slightly educated himself, he felt for those who wrote well, and with command of language (it is one of his own expressions), the respect the peasant feels for the Latin of his priest. But he also felt instinctively, and not without reason, that these matters of style pertained more to the higher flights of literature. To supply his needs, the lightest French pastry was better suited than such heavy nourishment. He said one day to Jouvin, before me, with the

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cynical frankness which was only excused by his bluntness,

"You polish your writings; they are those of a well read man; every one says so. Clever, learned, admirably well written, and I print them. Well, in my paper, no one reads them."

"No one reads them, indeed!"

"Will you make a bet? Daudet is here, and can be witness. I will print Cambronne's famous word in the very middle of one of your choicest pieces, and I will lose the bet if any one finds it out!"

Truth compels me to say that Jouvin did not care to risk the bet.

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MY FIRST DRESS COAT.

How did I come by it, that first dress coat? What primitive tailor, what confiding tradesman was it, trustful as Don Juan's famous Monsieur Dimanche, who upon the faith of my fantastic promises, decided one fine morning on bringing it to me, brand new, and artistically pinned up in a square of shiny green calico? It would be difficult for me to tell. Of the honest tailor, I can indeed recall nothing—so many tailors have since

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then crossed my path—save perhaps a vision as in a luminous mist, of a thoughtful brow and a large moustache. The coat indeed is there, before my eyes. Its image after twenty years still remains indelibly graven on my memory, as on imperishable brass. What a collar, my young friends! What lappels! And, above all, what skirts, shaped as the slimmest tail of the swallow! My brother, a man of experience, had said: "One must have a dress coat if one wishes to make one's way in the world." And the dear fellow counted much upon this piece of frippery for the advancement of my fame and fortune.

This, my first dress coat, made its *début* at Augustine Brohan's, and under what circumstances worthy of being transmitted to posterity, you shall now hear.

My little volume had just made its appearance, fresh and virginal, in rose-tinted cover. A few critics had noticed my rhymes. Even *l'Official* had printed my name. I was a poet; no longer hidden in a garret, but printed, published and exposed for sale in the shop windows. I was astonished that the busy folk in the streets did not turn

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round to look at me, as my eighteen years wandered along the pavement. I positively felt upon my forehead the pleasant pressure of a paper crown, made up of flattering paragraphs culled from the papers.

One day some one proposed to get me an invitation to Augustine Brohan's soirees. Who? some one. Some one, egad! You know him already: that eternal some one, who is like every one else, that amiable institution of Providence, who, of no personal value in himself and a mere aquaintance in the houses he frequents, yet goes everywhere, introduces you everywhere, is the friend of a day, of an hour, of whose name even you are ignorant, that essentially Parisian type.

You may imagine with what enthusiasm I accepted the proposal! To be invited to Augustine's house! Augustine, the famous actress, Augustine, the laughing representative of Molière's comic muse, softened somewhat by the more modern poetic smile of Musset's genius;—for while she acted the waiting maids at the Theatre Français, Musset had written his comedy *Louison* at her house; Augustine Brohan in short, in whom all

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Paris delighted, vaunting her wit, quoting her repartees; and who might already be said to have adorned herself with that swallow's plume, unsullied yet by ink, but already well sharpened, with which she was hereafter to sign those charming *Lettres de Suzanne!*

"Lucky dog!" said my brother, helping me on with the coat; "your fortune is made."

Nine o'clock was striking as I sallied forth.

At that time Augustine Brohan was living in the rue Lord Byron, at the top of the Champs Elysées, in one of those pretty coquettish little houses which seem to ignorant provincials the realization of the poetical dreams which they weave for themselves from the pages of the novelist. A railing, a tiny garden, four steps covered by an awning, an entrance hall filled with flowers, and then opening immediately from it, the drawing-room, a brilliantly lighted room in

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green, which I can see now vividly before me.

How I managed to get up those steps, how I made my entry, and how I presented myself, I cannot now remember. A footman announced my name, but this name, which

he mumbled, produced no effect on the brilliant assembly. I can only recollect hearing a woman's voice say: "So much the better, here is another dancer." It appears they were short of dancers; but what an entry for a poet!

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Startled and humiliated, I tried to lose myself among the crowd. How can I describe my dismay, when, a moment later, another mistake arose? My long hair, my dark and sombre looks excited general curiosity. I heard them whispering near me: "Who is it? Do look," and they laughed. At last some one said,

"It is the Wallachian Prince!"

"The Wallachian Prince? Oh yes, very likely."

I suppose that a Wallachian Prince had been expected that evening. My rank being thus settled for me, I was left in peace. But for all that, you cannot imagine how heavily my usurped crown weighed upon me all that evening. First a dancing man! then a Wallachian Prince! Could not these good people see my lyre?

Fortunately for me, a startling piece of news, flying from mouth to mouth, spread rapidly through the ballroom, casting into oblivion both the dancer and the Wallachian Prince. Marriage was at that time much the fashion among the feminine portion of the Comédie Company, and it was generally at Augustine

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Brohans' Wednesday receptions, where all the choicest talents of journalism, together with bankers and high government officials gathered round the lovely members or associates of the Français, that the foundations were laid of most of these romantic unions.

Mdlle. Fix, the witty actress, with her long Hebrew eyes, was soon to marry a great financier and die in childbirth. Mdlle. Figeac, Catholic and romantic, was already dreaming of the future day when a priest would solemnly bless her immense shop on the Boulevard Haussmann, just as if it were a vessel about to be launched. Emilie Dubois, the fair Emilie herself, although destined by the delicate style of her beauty to the perpetual representation of artless maidens, had visions of orange blossoms from behind the protecting shelter of her mother's shawl. As for Madeleine Brohan, the handsome and majestic sister of Augustine, she was not marrying, but was unmarrying just then; thereby giving Mario Uchard time and money to devote himself to the four acts of his *Fiammina*. What an explosion was therefore caused in that circle so highly charged with

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matrimonial electricity, when this news spread: "Gustave Fould has married Valérie." Gustave Fould, the minister's son! Valérie the charming actress! Now, all this seems very far off. After a flight to England, after letters in the papers and pamphlets written, after waging a war in Mirabeau's style against a father as inexorable as the "people's friend;" after the most romantic of romances, ending up in the most prosaic fashion, Gustave Fould, following, in that, Mario Uchard's example, wrote the *Comtesse Romani*, and eloquently displayed the history of his misfortunes on the stage. Mdlle. Valérie laid aside her married name, and signed, under the pseudonym of Gustave Haller, volumes entitled *Vertu*, with a lovely picture on the palest of blue covers. So the passionate language of love calmed down in an ocean of literature! But what endless gossip, what emotion it created that evening in Augustine's green drawing-room! The men, the officials, shook their heads, and with mouths round with astonishment, said, "Oh! This is very serious, very serious!" One overheard the following

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broken sentences. "Everything is going to the dogs." "Respect has died out." "The Emperor ought to interfere." "Sacred rights." "Paternal authority." The women on their side openly and gaily stood up in defence of the two lovers who had fled to London. "Well, if they are fond of each other!" "Why should not the father consent?" "He is a minister, but what of that?" "Since the Revolution, thank God, there is no longer a Bastille or a Fort-l'Evêque!" Picture to yourself all these people talking at the same time, and rising brilliant above the noisy hubbub, like a thread of gold on a piece of embroidery, the clear ringing laugh of Augustine, her full prominent eyes (those pretty short-sighted eyes) gleaming with fun, and the whole of her little plump figure the very embodiment of mirth.

At last comparative calm was restored and the quadrilles began. I danced. I was obliged to do so! I danced moreover somewhat badly for a Wallachian Prince. The quadrille once ended, I became stationary; foolishly held back by my short sight—too

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shy to sport an eyeglass, too much of a poet to wear spectacles, and dreading lest, at the slightest movement, I should bruise my knee against the corner of some piece of furniture, or plunge my nose into the trimming of a bodice. Soon hunger and thirst interfered in the matter; but for a kingdom I should never have dared to approach the buffet with all the rest of the world. I anxiously watched for the moment when it should be deserted; and while waiting, I joined the groups of political talkers, assuming a serious air, and feigning to scorn the charms of the smaller salon, whence came to me, with the pleasant sound of laughter and the tinkling of teaspoons against the porcelain, a delicate aroma of scented tea, of Spanish wines and cakes. At last they came back to dance, and I gathered up my courage. I entered, I was alone.

What a dazzling sight was that buffet! A crystal pyramid under the blaze of the candles, brilliant with glasses and decanters, white and glittering as snow in sunshine! I took up a glass as fragile as a flower, careful not to hold it too tightly lest I should break the stem. What should I pour into it? Come now,

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courage, I say to myself, since no one can see me. I stretched out my hand, and took at haphazard a decanter. It must be kirsch, I thought, from its diamond clearness. Well, I'll try a glass of kirsch; I like its perfume, its bitter and wild perfume that reminds me of the forest! And so, like an epicure, I slowly poured out, drop by drop, the beautiful clear liquid. I raised the glass to my lips. Oh, horror! it was only water. What a grimace I made! Suddenly a duet of laughter resounded from a black coat and a pink dress that I had not perceived flirting in a corner, and who were amused at my mistake.

I endeavoured to replace my glass, but I was nervous, my hand shook, and my sleeve caught I know not what. One glass, two glasses, three glasses fell! I turned round, my wretched coat tails swept a wild circle, and the white pyramid crashed to the ground, with all the sparkling, splintering, flashing uproar of an iceberg breaking to pieces.

At the noise of the catastrophe the mistress

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of the house rushes up. Luckily, she is as short-sighted as the Wallachian Prince, and he is able to escape from the buffet without being recognized. All the same, my evening

is spoilt. The massacre of small glasses and decanters weighs on my mind like a crime. My one idea is to get away. But the Dubois mamma, dazzled by my principality, catches

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hold of me, and will not allow me to leave till I have danced with her daughter, or indeed with both her daughters. I excuse myself as best I can ; I escape from her, and am stealing away, when a tall old man, with a shrewd smile, stopped my egress. It is Doctor Ricord, with whom I had exchanged a few words previously and who like the others, takes me for the Wallachian. "But, Prince, as you are inhabiting the Hôtel du Sénat, and as we are near neighbours, pray wait for me, I can offer you a seat in my carriage." How willingly would I accept, but I have no overcoat. What would Ricord think of a Wallachian Prince without furs, and shivering in his dress coat? Let me escape quickly, and hurry home on foot, through the snow and fog, sooner than allow my poverty to be seen. Always half blind and more confused than ever, I reach the door and slip out, not however without getting somehow entangled in the tapestries. "Won't Monsieur take his coat?" a footman calls after me.

There I was, at two o'clock in the morning, far from my home, alone in the streets, hungry and frozen, with the devil's own self, a badly

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lined purse, in my pocket. But hunger inspired me with a brilliant idea: "Suppose I go to the markets!" I had often heard of the markets, and of a certain Gaidras, whose establishment remained open all night, and where for the sum of three sous they provided a plateful of succulent cabbage soup. By Jove, yes, to the markets I would go. I would sit down at those tables like the veriest prowling vagabond. All my pride had vanished. The wind is icy cold; hunger makes me desperate. "My kingdom for a horse," said another prince, and I say to myself as I trot along: "My principality, my Wallachian principality, for a basin of good soup in a warm corner.

Gaidras' establishment looks a mere filthy hovel, all slimy and badly lighted, thrust back beneath the colonnades of the old market place. Often and often since then, when noctambulism was the fashion, have we future great men spent whole nights there, elbows on table, amidst tobacco smoke and literary talk. But at first I must own, notwithstanding my hunger, I almost drew back at the sight of those blackened dingy walls, that dense

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smoke, those late sitters, snoring with their backs against the wall or lapping up their soup like dogs ; the amazing caps of the Don Juans of the gutter, the enormous drab felt hats of

the market porters, and the healthy rough blouse of the market gardener side by side with the greasy tatters of the prowler of the night. Nevertheless I entered, and I may at once add that my black coat found its fellows.

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Black coats that own no great coat are not rare in Paris after midnight in the winter, and they are hungry enough to eat three sous'

worth of cabbage soup! The cabbage soup was however exquisite; full of perfume as a garden, and smoking like a crater. I had two helpings, although a custom peculiar to the

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establishment—inspired by a wholesome distrust—of fastening the forks and spoons with a chain to the table, hindered me a little. I paid, and fortified by the substantial mess, resumed my way to the Quartier Latin.

What a picture that return home! The return of the poet, trotting up the rue de Tournon, with his coat collar turned up, while dancing before his sleepy eyes are the elegant shadows of a fashionable evening party mingling with the famished spectres of the market-place. He stands knocking his boots against the kerbstone of the Hôtel du Sénat, to shake off the snow, while opposite, the bright lamps of a brougham light up the front of an old mansion, and Doctor Ricord's coachman cries out: "Gate, if you please." Life in Paris is made up of these contrasts.

"A wasted evening!" said my brother, the next morning. "You have been taken for a Wallachian Prince, and have not succeeded in launching your book. But all is not yet lost; you must make up for it when you make your 'digestion call!' as we say in Paris."

The digestion of a glass of water, what

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irony! It was quite two months before I made up my mind to pay that call. However one day I summoned up courage. Besides her official receptions on Wednesdays, Augustine Brohan received more unceremoniously on Sunday afternoon. I resolutely started off.

In Paris a *matinée* that respects itself cannot decently begin till three or even four o'clock in the afternoon. I, poor unsophisticated mortal, taking the word *matinée* literally, arrived there at one o'clock, and thought myself already late.

"How early you come, sir!" said a fair-haired little boy of five or six years of age, who, dressed in an embroidered velvet suit, was riding a mechanical toy horse through the fresh spring greenery of the garden. The young man impressed me! I bowed to the fair curls, the horse, the velvet, the embroideries, and too bashful to retrace my steps, I went in. Madame was not yet dressed, and I waited all alone for half an hour. At last Madame made her appearance; screwing up her eyes she recognized her Wallachian Prince; then by way of beginning the

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conversation, she said: "You are not at *La Marche*, Prince?" At *La Marche*, I, who had never seen a race nor a jockey!

Really I felt too much ashamed! a sudden throb rose from my heart to my brain; and then the bright sun, the sweet perfume of spring wafted from the garden through the open casement, the absence of all ceremony, the smiling and kind-hearted little woman, all combined to encourage me, and I poured forth my whole heart. I told her all—confessing everything: how I was neither a Wallachian, nor a Prince, but a simple poet; and the adventure of my glass of kirsch, and my supper at the markets, and my wretched return home, and my provincial timidity, and my short sight, and my aspirations—all seasoned by the accent of my southern province. Augustine Brohan laughed heartily. Suddenly a bell rang.

"Ah! my dragoons," she exclaimed.

"What dragoons?"

"Two dragoons they are sending me from the camp at Châlons, and who, it appears, have a wonderful taste for acting."

I wished to take leave.

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"No, no, stay; we are going to rehearse *Lait d'ânesse*, and you shall help me with your criticisms. Sit down by me on the sofa!"

Two huge fellows came in, shy, awkward, tightly belted, purple in the face (one of them acts somewhere at the present day). A folding screen is arranged, I settle myself, and the representation begins.

"They do not act so badly," said Augustine Brohan in a low tone, "but what boots! My dear critic, do you smell those boots?"

To be on these intimate terms with the wittiest actress in Paris raised me to the seventh heaven. I threw myself back on the sofa, nodding my head and smiling in a capable manner. I was positively intoxicated with delight.

Even now I can recall the smallest details of that interview. But see how all depends upon our point of view. I had told Sarcey the comical story of my first appearance in society, and one day Sarcey repeated it to Augustine Brohan. Well the ungrateful Augustine—whom, it is true, I have not seen for thirty years—swore most sincerely that

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she knew nothing of me but my books. She had forgotten everything! Everything—all that had played such an important part in my life—the broken glasses, the Wallachian Prince, the rehearsal of *Lait d'ânesse*, and the boots of the heavy dragoons.

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THE STORY OF MY BOOKS.

"LE PETIT CHOSE."

("*Little What's His Name.*")

No other book of mine has ever been written under such capricious and varying conditions. Without plan or notes, it was a frenzied, hurried improvisation dashed down on coarse whitey-brown paper, on which my pen stumbled as it raced along, and which, once

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scribbled over, I threw impetuously on to the floor. All this took place some two hundred leagues from Paris, between Beaucaire and Nismes, in a large, lonely, far-away country house, that some relatives had kindly placed

at my disposal during the few winter months I had come thither in search of the closing scenes of a drama that I could by no means bring satisfactorily to its climax; but the melancholy quiet of the great plains, the

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groves of mulberry and olive trees, and the vines undulating down to the Rhone, in short, the gloom of this retreat in the midst of nature was out of harmony with the conventional forms of a theatrical composition. Probably

also, the country air, the mistral sweeping across the sun, the neighbourhood of the town where I was born, the names of the little villages, where as a boy, I used to play, Bezouces, Redessan, Jonquières, stirred up within me, a whole world of old memories,

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and soon I abandoned my drama, in order to write a kind of autobiography—*Le Petit Chose*—the story of a child.

Begun during the first days of February, 1866, this headlong work was carried on without a break till the second fortnight in March. Nowhere else, at no other time of my life, not even when a caprice for silence and solitude led me to shut myself up in a lighthouse, have I lived so completely isolated. The house was far from the road, surrounded by fields; apart even from the farm belonging to it, the noises of which never reached me. Twice in the day, the wife of the *baïlo* (farmer) spread my meal, at the end of a vast dining-room, all the windows of which, with one exception, had closed shutters. This stuttering Provençale, dark complexioned, with a nose flattened like that of a Kafir, could not make out what strange task had sent me into the country in midwinter, and held me in suspicious terror, setting down the dishes in haste, leaving me without uttering a word, avoiding even a glance in my direction. It was the only face I saw during that hermit-like existence, the monotony of which was only broken by a

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stroll in the evening through the avenue of tall plane trees, standing bare amid the plaintive sighing of the wind, and the sadness of the cold red winter sunset, which, rapidly fading, was greeted by a discordant clamour of frogs. Directly I had finished my book, I set to work on that laborious business, the second copy. It was contrary to my whole nature of Improvisatore, of Troubadour: and I was attacking it with all my courage, when one morning, the voice of the *baïlesse*, hailed me loudly in the local dialect: "*Moussu, moussu, vaqui un homo!*"—Sir, sir, here is a man!"—The man was a Parisian, a newspaper reporter, sent down to some agricultural show near there, and who, knowing I was somewhere in the neighbourhood, came to see me. He breakfasted with me; we gossipped about the news, the papers, the boulevards. The Paris fever seized me, and in the evening I started off with my intruding guest.

This abrupt relinquishment of my labour, the suddenness with which I forsook my work, just as it was taking form, gives an exact idea of my life at that time, influenced

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by every passing fancy, full of fitful impulse, whim more than will, following only the caprice of the moment, and the blind fancy of a youth that threatened to be endless. On my return to Paris, I left my manuscript to grow yellow for many a day at the bottom of a drawer, not being able to find in my broken-up existence, the necessary time for a more lengthy task; but the following winter, pursued by the thought of this book, I took the violent resolution of withdrawing myself from everything that could possibly divert me from my work,—from the noisy irruptions, which at that time, turned my defenceless dwelling into a regular gipsy camp, and I settled myself in a friend's apartment— in that small room which Jean Duboys then occupied on the entresol of the Hôtel Lassus, Place de l'Odéon.

Jean Duboys, to whom his plays and novels lent a certain celebrity, was a kind, good creature, gentle and timid, with the confiding smile of a child beaming over a Robinson Crusoe style of beard, a hirsute, unkempt beard that did not seem to belong to his face. His writing was wanting in style, but I

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appreciated his good-nature, I admired the courage with which he devoted himself to interminably long novels, arranged beforehand in given lengths, of which he wrote each day so many words, lines and pages. At last a play of his entitled: *La Volonté*, was produced at the Comédie Française, and although set forth in execrable verse, I, who was so devoid of will myself, was impressed by it. I had therefore come to place myself under his influence, hoping to gain a love of work from the constant example of this indefatigable toiler.

The fact is that for two or three months I fagged away, seated at a little table next to his, under the light of a low arched window, which framed, as in a picture, the Odéon and its portico, and the deserted square, all glittering with hoar frost. From time to time Duboys, who was working at a great sensational novel, would interrupt himself to relate to me the combination of incidents in his book, or to develop his theories on the evolution of the human species. In the mind of this methodical and quiet bureaucrat there ran a vein of visionary mysticism, just

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as, in his library, there was a shelf devoted to the Kabbalah, the black arts, the most whimsical lucubrations. Later on, the flaw in his brain deepened, insanity ensued, and poor Jean Duboys died mad at the close of the siege, without having finished his great philosophical poem *Enceldonne*, wherein all humanity was to revolve around a central axis. But who then, would have suspected the sad destiny of this excellent fellow, so quiet and sensible, whom I watched enviously, while he covered with his neat writing, page after page of a novel for some trumpery paper, looking up now and then at the clock, in order to ascertain if he had finished his task.?

There was a hard frost that winter, and, notwithstanding the scuttles full of coal swallowed up by the grate, we often saw, during those laborious night vigils so indefinitely prolonged, the rime throwing over the window panes a veil of fantastic tracery. Outside, chill shadows wandered through the opaque mist that filled the square: it was the audience leaving the Odéon, or the students who were making their way to Bullier, shouting as they

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went along, in the exuberance of their spirits. On the evenings of the masked balls, the narrow stairs of the hotel shook beneath the mad rushes of hurrying footsteps, accompanied by the constant tinkle of the jester's bells. Far on in the night the same fool's cap and bells pursued its mad career of folly on its homeward road, and often, when the hotel waiters, sleeping too soundly, were slow to open, I heard the ringing of the little bells before the door diminishing in force as the wearer became disheartened, and reminding me of Edgar Poe's *Cask of Amontillado*, where the unhappy walled-up wretch, weary of supplication and screaming, only betrays his presence by the last convulsive movement of his fool's cap. I still retain a delightful remembrance of the winter evenings during which I wrote the first part of *Le Petit Chose*. The second part was written very much later. In the interval between the two parts an unexpected, serious and decisive event took place. I married! How did that happen? To what magic art did such a wild gipsy as I was then fall a victim? What spell was cast over me? What charm

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was strong enough to bind fast my once ever-changing caprice?

For several months the manuscript was again abandoned, forgotten at the bottom of a wedding trunk, spread out on hotel tables in front of an arid ink-stand and a dried-up pen. It was so delicious under the pine trees of the Estérel; it was so pleasant to fish for sea-urchins off the rocks of Pormieu! Then settling the little household, and the novelty of home life, the nest to be built and adorned, all were excellent pretexts for idleness.

It was only the following summer, under the shadow of the big trees of the Château de Vigneux, whose flat Italian roofs and tall shrubberies extend towards the plains of Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, that I resumed my interminable novel. Six exquisite months, far from Paris—at that time thrown into confusion by the Exhibition (which I refused even to look at) of 1867.

I wrote *Le Petit Chose* sometimes seated on a mossy bank at the end of the park, where the gambols of the rabbits and the gliding of the adders through the heather

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alone disturbed me: or in the boat on the pond, which shimmered with every colour of the prism, reflected from the glory of the summer sky; or else, on the rainy days, in our room, while my wife played Chopin to me, music that I cannot even now listen to without recalling the dripping of the rain-drops on the green sea of elm trees, the harsh scream of the peacocks, the call of the pheasant, mingled with the perfume of the trees in flower and the smell of the damp woods.

At last, in autumn, the book was finished, appeared first in numbers, in Paul Dalloz's *Petit Moniteur*, was afterwards published by Hetzel, and met with some success, notwithstanding all its defects.

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I have mentioned in what manner this first work of any length had been undertaken, thoughtlessly, and at random; but its most serious fault was, that I wrote it too soon. One is not sufficently matured at five and twenty, to be able to look back upon, and annotate one's own life: and *Le Petit Chose*, especially the first part, is in reality, but an echo of my own childhood and youth.

Later on, I should have had less fear of dwelling too much upon childish trifles, and I should have given fuller play to the distant recollections in which lie those first impressions which are so vivid and so deep, that all that comes after, renews but never surpasses them. In the ever-increasing movement of life, in the perpetual flow of days and years, facts are lost, fade away and disappear, but the past stands out, clear and bright, bathed in the light of the breaking dawn. We may forget a recent date, a face seen but yesterday, but we ever remember the pattern on the walls of our childhood's nursery, and a name or a lullaby of the time when we could not read. How far back can memory reach into those past times! I can

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remember, for instance, when I was three years old, a display of fireworks at Nismes, given in honour of some Saint Louis or another, and which I saw, carried in arms, from a hill top covered with pines. The minutest details are even now present to my mind—the sighing of the night wind, no doubt my first night in the open air, the noisy delight of the crowd, the "ah!" rising and swelling, bursting forth with each fresh rocket, and the catherine wheels shedding a pallid and spectral light on the faces around me.

Again, I see myself about the same time, standing on a chair in the small clerical school in front of a blackboard, chalking my A B C, all proud of my precocious knowledge. What memories, and sensations, what sounds and perfumes come back from those past days as from another world, and yet among them all, not the trace of an incident or an emotion!

At the further end of the manufactory where *Petit Chose* spent his childhood, near some forsaken buildings, the doors of which beat to and fro in the solitary wind, there grew,

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out of doors, some tall pink oleanders, diffusing around them a bitter-sweet scent, which haunts me still, even after forty years. I should wish for a little more of that same scent in the first pages of my book.

Too brief also, are the chapters on Lyons, where I have neglected many vivid and valuable sensations. Not that my childish eyes could have comprehended the originality and grandeur of that industrial and mystical town, with the ever-present mists rising from its rivers, penetrating its walls and its people, and permeating even the works of its writers and artists:—Ballanche, Flandrin, de Laprade, Chenavard, Puvis de Chavannes. But if the inner personality of the country escaped me, I have, on the other hand, imperishable memories, all of which found their place in *Le Petit Chose*, of the enormous working hive of the Croix-Rousse, buzzing with the sound of its hundred thousand looms: and, on the rising ground opposite, Fourvières, processions streaming through its narrow streets, lined on each side with religious wares, and stalls full of relics; and resounding with continual pealing and chiming.

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What I always find faithfully represented is the *ennui*, the feeling of exile, the sufferings of a southern family lost and enveloped in the foggy atmosphere of Lyons—that change from one province to another, the difference of climate, customs, language; that mental distance, never entirely obliterated by facilities of communication. I was ten years of age, and already sometimes tormented by the desire to lose my own personality, to incarnate myself in other beings: the mania for observation and analysis was already laying hold of me. My chief amusement during my walks was to pick out some passer-by, to follow him through Lyons, through all his idle strolling or busy occupations, striving to identify myself with his life, and to enter into his innermost thoughts.

One day however, when I had thus followed a gorgeous female in brilliant attire to the door of a small house with closed shutters, from the ground-floor of which arose a sound of discordant voices, accompanied by the harp, my parents, to whom I expressed my surprise, forbade my wandering studies and observations of life.

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But how came I, while recording the different stages of my youth, to pass by without a word the various religious crises which stirred Le Petit Chose so painfully: and the rebellion of his spirit against the irrational mysteries he was bound to believe—rebellions quickly followed by remorse and despair, prostrating the child on his knees in dark corners of lonely churches, into which he stole furtively, ashamed and trembling at the idea of being seen. And moreover why did I leave the little man that appearance of gentleness and good temper, without mentioning the diabolic phase upon which he entered towards his thirteenth year, inspired by a sudden thirst for life and its enjoyments, an impatient desire to tear himself away from the withering sadness and tears that filled his parental home, rendered day by day more sombre by approaching ruin? It was the outspring of a southern temperament, and an imagination too much restrained. The delicate and timid child became transformed into a bold and violent spirit, ready for any mad prank. He neglected school, and spent his days on the river, amongst the crowd of

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steamboats, barges and tugs, rowing about in the rain, a pipe between his teeth, a flask of absinthe or brandy in his pocket, having endless hairbreadth escapes from the paddles of a steamer, the collision of a collier, from the swift current which bore him against the

piles of a bridge, or under a towing-rope, half drowned, picked up again with broken head, cuffed by the watermen, who were exasperated by the awkwardness of this brat, too weak for his oars; and in the midst of all these dangers, and blows, and fatigues, he felt a

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savage delight, a widening of his whole being, and of the sombre horizon. Later on, a few *Contes du Lundi* have given a sketch of these momentous days, but how much better would it have been placed in *L'Histoire d'un Enfant.*

The naughty little Chose already possessed a faculty that he has never lost—the gift of seeing and judging himself, of seizing himself in the very act, *in flagrante delicto*, as if he were perpetually accompanied by a ferocious and formidable overseer. Not what is called conscience, for our conscience scolds, preaches, and, mixing itself up with our affairs, modifies or arrests them. And then one can lull it to sleep, that good, kind conscience, with easy excuses or subterfuges; whereas the witness of whom I am speaking never grew weaker, never mixed in one's life, and remained simply on the watch. It was as an inner eye, impassible, rigid, a cold and inert *double*, who, during the most violent outbursts of Petit Chose, quietly observed everything, and not till next day said "A word with you." Read the chapter headed "He is dead! pray for him!" It is a leaf out of my life,

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absolutely true. It was exactly thus that we learnt my brother's death, and I can still hear ringing in my ears the poor father's cry, guessing that his son was dead; so heartrending, so piteous, that first great cry of human grief near to me in every sense, that all night long, weeping and despairing, I found myself repeating. "He is dead," with the paternal intonation. In this manner was my *double* revealed to me; the implacable witness, who in the midst of our mourning, had noted, as at the theatre, the truth to nature of that wail of anguish, and practised it on my lips. I regret on reading over this book to find nothing of this avowal, especially in that first part, where the character of Daniel Eyssette resembles me so much.

Yes, it is indeed myself, that little Chose, obliged at sixteen years of age to gain his daily bread at that horrible trade of usher, and carrying it out far away in the provinces, in a country of pits and furnaces, which sent us rough little mountaineers, who insulted me in the harsh and brutal dialect of the Cévennes. A prey to all the persecutions of these little monsters, surrounded by bigots,

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and coarse vulgar pedants who despised me, I there suffered all the degrading humiliations of poverty.

No other sympathy had I, in the melancholy of that prison, but that of the priest, whom I have called "*l'Abbé Germane*," and the frightful little "*Bamban*," whose ludicrous face, always covered with ink and mud, rises up sadly before me while I write.

I remember yet another of my little pupils, a delicate and refined nature, to whom I had become much attached, and whose studies I carefully encouraged, for the mere pleasure of watching the development of his youthful intelligence as one watches a bud opening in the spring. Touched by the care I bestowed upon him, the child had extracted a promise that I should spend the holidays at his home in the country. His parents would be so happy to know me and thank me! And, on the day when the prizes were distributed, after all his successes—for which he was greatly indebted to me—my pupil came, and taking me by the hand, prettily led me up to his people; father, mother and sisters, all elegantly dressed, and busily occupied

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putting his prizes into their waggonette. I must have presented a somewhat dilapidated and uninviting appearance in my shabby old clothes, for the family hardly bestowed a glance upon me, and the poor little fellow went off with tears in his eyes, ashamed at his own and my disappointment. Cruel and humiliating moments, withering and dishonouring life! I trembled with rage, in my little attic under the roof, while the carriage bore away the child, loaded with his wreaths, and the vulgar folk who had wounded me in such a contemptible manner.

How often, long after I had taken leave of that prison house at Alais, did I not awake in the middle of the night, bathed in tears, dreaming that I was still there, a victimized usher. Fortunately, this painful beginning of life has not hardened me, and I do not curse too roundly those wretched days, which enabled me to bear more lightly the trials of my literary novitiate and first struggling years in Paris. Those were indeed hard times, of which the story of little Chose gives but a faint idea.

Moreover there is but little taken from

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real life in the second part of the book, except my shoeless arrival, my blue socks, my goloshes, and the brotherly welcome, the ingenious devotion of that "*Mother Jacques*," whose real name is Ernest Daudet, the one bright figure of my childhood, and my youth. But with this exception, all the other personages are purely fictitious.

Not however that models were wanting, some most interesting and rare, but as I have just said, I was too young when I wrote the book. Part of my life was still too near to me, I wanted distance to focus it all, and not seeing, I invented. For instance the little Chose has never been an actor, indeed he has never been able to say a word in public. He has never dealt in china: Pierrotte with her black eyes, the lady on the first floor, her negress '*White Coucou*' thrown on the canvas, as the painters say, are wanting both in depth and vitality. The same may be said of the literary outlines, in which people have chosen to recognize wounding personalties that I never even dreamt of.

To be noted however among the realities of my book, is the description of the room

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under the roof, near the steeple of Saint-Germain-de-Prés, in a house since pulled down, and whose absence makes a blank before my eyes each time I pass by and look up, seeking in vain for the place where so much folly and so much misery, so many nights of fruitful labour or of despairing solitude were spent.

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LITERARY SALONS.[1]

At the present day, not one such, I believe, remains. We have other *salons*, more in unison with the spirit of the time—political *salons*—like those of Madame Edmond Adam, or Madame d'Haussonville, either all of one political party or all of the other, where prefects are proposed, ministers deposed, and where on gala days appear the Orléans princes or Gambetta. Then there are the *salons* where people amuse themselves, or rather try to amuse themselves; full of re-

[1] Written in 1879 for the *Nouveau Temps*, published at St. Petersburg.

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membrances and regrets! They sup, they play, they endeavour to the utmost of their power to revive the delights of Compiègne; pretty hothouses, beneath whose fragile crystal roof bloom in all their factitious splendour, the scentless flowers of the hollow worldly circles. But the real literary *salon*, where, gathered round a gracious and kindly muse, literary men, or those who believed themselves such, assembled once a week to recite their little verses, dipping the while their little dry biscuits in little cups of tea; a *salon* like this in short, has undoubtedly disappeared. Although I am not old, it has yet been my lot to know some of these blue-stocking *salons*, banished nowadays to the provinces, more out of fashion even than the guitar, the "aspirations after the Unknowable," and the *quatrains* scribbled in ladies' albums.

Let us fan our recollections of twenty years ago. *Pft! pft! pft!* The dust rises in a dainty cloud, and in this cloud, distinctly drawn and becoming gradually clearer, as the apparition of a fairy, is the pleasing outline of excellent Madame Ancelot. Madame Ancelot lived at that time in the Rue Saint

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Guillaume; a short street of provincial aspect, forgotten somehow by the indefatigable Haussmann in the very heart of Paris, where the grass grew between the stones, where the sound of wheels was never heard, and where the tall houses, too tall in proportion for their three stories, allowed only a distant and chilly daylight to penetrate. The silent old mansion with its great gate never open, the shutters of its balconies always closed, looked as if it had lain for centuries asleep under the wand of some enchanter. The interior did not belie the promise of the exterior; the corridor was all in white, the staircase dark and echoing, the ceilings lofty, and over the great windows pictures were let into the panelling. Everything was faded and wan, having lost all semblance of vitality; and in the middle of it all, well suited to her surroundings, was Madame Ancelot all in white, round and wrinkled like a little red apple, just such in fact, as one pictures to oneself the fairies of the stories, who never die, but grow gently old, through thousands of years. Madame Ancelot loved birds like all good fairies. All round the drawing-room, hiding

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the walls, were piled cages of warblers, as at the bird-fanciers' shops on the quay. But even the birds themselves seemed to pipe only old-fashioned tunes. In the place of honour, in the best light and most prominent position, hung a large portrait by Baron Gérard, of the muse of this household, with flowing locks, dressed in the fashion of Louis

the Eighteenth's time, smiling with the smile then in vogue and posed in a well-chosen attitude to set off, with a suggestion of flight, like that of Galatea, the tip of an exquisitely white and round shoulder. Forty years later than the date of the picture of which I speak, Madame Ancelot still wore low dresses, but it must be owned, the shoulders displayed

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were no longer those marvels of round white loveliness formerly painted by Baron Gérard. But what did the dear old lady care? In 1858 she still believed herself the beautiful Madame Ancelot of 1823, when Paris was applauding her pretty piece of *Marie; ou, les Trois Époques!* There was nothing besides

to warn her of the flight of time; everything aged and faded with herself, the roses of the carpets, the cords and tassels of the hangings, the human beings around her and the remembrances of other days; and while the century marched on, this arrested existence, this interior of another age, motionless as a

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vessel at anchor, remained buried in the stillness of the silent past.

One simple word would have broken the spell! But who would pronounce that sacrilegious word? who would have the courage to say, "We are growing old?" The *habitués* least of all, for they too were of the same period, they too could not believe they were growing older. Behold M. Patin, the illustrious M. Patin, professor at the Sorbonne, playing the young man over there, in the left-hand corner by the window. He is a little man, with white hair smartly curled, and of a discreet friskiness suited to a pedant of the First Empire. Then there is Viennet, the Voltairian writer of fables, long and spare as the crane of his own dry fables. The divinity of the *salon*, admired and petted by all, surrounded by a crowd of worshippers, was Alfred de Vigny, great poet indeed, but great poet of yet another epoch, looking eccentric and obsolete with his angelic airs and scattered white locks, too long for his diminutive figure. Alfred de Vigny had, when dying, bequeathed his parrokeet to Madame Ancelot. The parrokeet, on a gilt perch, took the place of

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honour in the middle of the room, and the old *habitués* stuffed it with good things, for was it not the parrot of de Vigny? Some profane jesters nicknamed it "Eloa," on account of its great beak and its profound eye. But this was hereafter; at the time when I was presented to Madame Ancelot, the poet was still alive, and the parrot did not yet mingle its short, shrill, and aged cry with the formidable burst of song, which—as a kind of protest, I imagine—rose from all the cages whenever M. Viennet tried to recite a few verses.

Sometimes a few younger people enlivened the evening. On such days one might meet Lachaud, the celebrated lawyer with his wife, Madame Ancelot's daughter; she, somewhat melancholy, he, fat and smooth, with a fine Roman head, which might have been that of a jurisconsult of the last days of Rome. There were poets too, Octave Lacroix, the author of the *Chanson d'Avril;* and *L'Amour et son Train;* both of which were played at the Théâtre Français; he impressed me strongly, for though mild enough in appearance, he was secretary to Sainte-Beuve. Emmanuel des Essarts was

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there, brought by his father, a distinguished writer and librarian at Sainte-Geneviève. Emmanuel des Essarts was at that time quite a young man, scarcely known, and wearing still in his buttonhole, if I recollect aright, the green badge of the "Ecole Normale." He

occupies at present the literary chair at the University of Clermont, which does not prevent him from publishing, most years, one or two volumes in which may be found some charming verses. Delightful Professor, as you may guess, with a twig of the poet's myrtle

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wreath in his cap. Then there were the ladies, poetical ladies like Madame Anaïs Ségalas, and from time to time a newly discovered budding muse, with golden curls and blue eye full of inspiration, who attitudinized

in the antiquated style of Delphine Gay and Élisa Mercœur. Thus did the fair Jenny Sabatier one day make her appearance, her real name being Tirecuir—terribly prosaic name for a muse. From me also, verses were

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expected, as from the others, but it appears I was bashful, and that my voice was affected thereby. "Louder," Madame Ancelot used to say to me, "louder, M. de la Rochejacquelein cannot hear you!" There were half a dozen such old fogies, deaf as Etruscan vases, never hearing, but always assuming an attentive air, with the left hand well rounded, trumpet fashion behind the ear. Gustave Nadaud however could make himself heard. Stumpy, snub-nosed, a large face, an expansive smile, and affecting a rustic cheerfulness which was not without its merit in this sleepy atmosphere, the author of *Les Deux Gendarmes* would take his seat at the piano, sing loudly, thump hard and awaken everybody. What a success he always had! We were all jealous of him. Sometimes too, an actress, anxious to make her way, would come to declaim a few verses. It was a tradition of the house that Rachel had recited stanzas in Madame Ancelot's drawing-room; a picture near the chimneypiece testified to the fact. The recitation of stanzas continued; only it was no longer Rachel who recited. This picture was not the only one of its kind, one

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might be found in nearly every corner—all the work of Madame Ancelot, who had not disdained to handle the brush and mahl stick in her time, and all dedicated to her "Salon," intended to perpetuate the remembrance of some great event in her tiny world. The inquiring mind will be able to find them reproduced (oh, cruel irony of fate, by E. Benassit, the most sceptical of painters,) in a kind of autobiography, *Mon Salon*, by Madame Ancelot, published by Dentu. Each of the "faithful" is therein portrayed, and I think that even I am represented in it, somewhere in the background.

This somewhat heterogeneous society met thus every Tuesday, rue Saint Guillaume. They came late, and for the following reason: a few doors off, rue du Cherche-Midi, placed there like a permanent protest, was a rival "salon"; the salon of Madame Mélanie Waldor. In former days the two muses had been intimate, Madame Ancelot had even at first given Mélanie a helping hand. Then suddenly Mélanie had shaken her off, had raised up altar against altar—a repetition of the conduct of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse

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and Madame du Deffand. Mélanie Waldor wrote—novels, verses, and a play called: *La Tirelire de Jeannette.* One day Alfred de Musset, in a fit of ill humour, wrote some terribly sarcastic lines about her, a biting and high flavoured medley, savouring of Aretino and Juvenal, which will, for want of a better reason, hand the name of the muse down to posterity on the wings of clandestine publications. What could Madame Waldor have done to the spoilt child? I remember her well, dressed all in velvet, with her black hair—black with the blackness of a centenarian raven that absolutely refuses to grow white—hanging loosely over the sofa, on which exhausted and languid she reclined, affecting broken-hearted attitudes. But the eye brightened and the lips became viperish directly *she* was mentioned. *She!* that is to say the other one, the enemy, good old Madame Ancelot. Between these two it was war to the knife. Madame Waldor had purposely chosen the same day, and when at about eleven o'clock one tried to slip away unobserved and dash over to the opposite house, a freezing glance nailed the truant to his

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place. Escape was impossible, so one remained; to make wit, to abuse poor old Ancelot, and to exercise one's talents in repeating or inventing scandalous anecdotes. Over the way one made up for it by telling a thousand mysterious legends about Madame Waldor's political influence.

What time lost, what hours wasted on those venomous or stupid little nothings, in that atmosphere of little mouldy verses, and little rancid calumnies, on those paste-board Parnassus, where no spring ever flowed, no bird ever sang, and where the poetic laurel wreath was the colour of the green leather cushion of a head clerk's stool! To think that I too have climbed those Parnassus! One must see everything in youth! It lasted just as long as my dress coat lasted.

Poor dear old coat, what narrow passages did its tails not brush through in those days; what banisters did it not polish with its sleeves. I remember having worn it also in the "salon" of the Comtesse Chodsko.

The Countess had for husband a kind, learned old man, who was hardly ever seen, and not of much account. She must have

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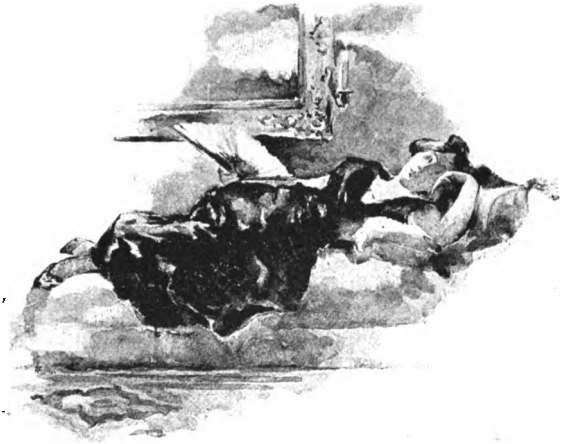
been very handsome; at this time she was a tall, stiff, dry woman, with a domineering and even ill-tempered air. Murger, it was said, had been much struck by her, and represented her in his *Madame Olympe.*



Murger had in truth at one time made a voyage of discovery into that fashionable society which he did not generally frequent, and here was the society which he ingenuously believed himself to have discovered.

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This fashionable society was meanly lodged, perched high up on a third floor of the rue de Tournon in three cold and shabby little rooms, looking out on a small courtyard. Nevertheless one went to them, and the company was not of the vulgar herd. It was there I saw for the first time, Philarète Chasles, whose restless spirit and nervous pen belonged to the school of Saint-Simon and Michelet. His astonishing *Mémoires*, full of fight and devilment, made up of attacks and parrying thrusts, seeming filled from the first chapter to the last with the continual noise of clashing foils and shivering swords, are now being published, and passing almost unnoticed through the midst of a Paris absolutely indifferent to anything that is not either painting or politics. Above all things a

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literary man, he was, like Balzac, devoured all his life by the thirst for a wider existence and a love of dandyism; he remained a librarian at the very gates of the *Académie*, which however were never opened to him, why, no one knows, and he died at Venice of cholera.

I also met there Pierre Véron, Philibert Audebrand, and a curious couple—very curious, and at the same time very sympathetic, whom I must crave leave to introduce to my reader. We are now in the drawing-room, let us seat ourselves and look on: the door opens, and Philoxène Boyer and his wife make their entry. Philoxène Boyer! another of those strange sons, the terror and punishment of families, chance productions that no atavism can account for; seeds brought from we know not whence on the wings of the wind, from far away over the seas; and which one fine day with their curiously jagged leaves and their strangely vivid flowers, suddenly burst forth into bloom in the midst of a cabbage plot, in the very middle of a quiet *bourgeois* kitchen garden! Son of Boyer, he who knew more Greek

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than any other man of his time: born between two pages of a lexicon, never having as a child known any other walk or garden than the learned garden of Greek roots, fed upon Greek, anointed with Greek; Philoxène with his Greek nomenclature seemed destined to see his name graven on the marble, side by side with those of the Eggers and the Estiennes in the pantheon of the Hellenists. But Father Boyer counted without Balzac. Philoxène, like all schoolboys of that date, kept volumes of Balzac in his desk; and so ardent an admirer was he, that having inherited a hundred thousand francs[1] from his mother, he found nothing better to do than to come to Paris to spend those hundred thousand francs, as they are spent in the pages of Balzac. The project was put into execution in the most methodical manner—bouquets were offered, gloved finger-tips kissed, duchesses conquered, courtesans with tawny eyes bought; nothing was wanting, the whole crowned by a wild orgie, modelled upon that in the *Peau de*

[1] Four thousand pounds.

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Chagrin. The *Peau de Chagrin,* that is to say, the hundred thousand francs, had lasted exactly six months. The son of the great Hellenist had amused himself prodigiously. With his pocket empty and his head full of rhymes, he declared he would henceforth only follow the calling of a poet! But fate decreed that, till the day of his death, Philoxène should be the victim of the author of his fancy. Throwing aside Balzac, he chanced upon Shakespeare. Balzac had only devoured his money, Shakespeare devoured his life. One morning, perhaps it was the consequence of a dream, Philoxène awoke head over ears in love with the works of Shakespeare. And as this man, at once weak and determined, gentle and violent, could do nothing by halves, from that morning, henceforward, he devoted himself body and soul to Shakespeare! To study Shakespeare, to know him by heart, from his most obscure sonnet to his most contested play, was nothing, and that part of the business only took a few months. But Philoxène had the pretension to do better than that: wishing to write a book upon

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Shakespeare, a book that should be complete, final, in a word, worthy of the divinity; he conceived the impracticable project of reading first everything, absolutely everything, without omitting the least little article or most insignificant document that has been published upon Shakespeare for the last two hundred years up to the present day, in order to extract from it all its innermost essence. Then began a piling up of dusty folios enough to build the tower of Babel: and, alas! Babel it was very soon in the head of the unfortunate Philoxène.

I have seen him at home, no longer master in his own house, but overpowered on all sides by Shakespeare. Five thousand, nay, perhaps ten thousand volumes on Shakespeare, of all shapes, in all languages, reaching up to the ceiling, obstructing the windows, invading the armchairs, loading the tables, heaped up, falling down, choking both air and light, and in the midst of it all

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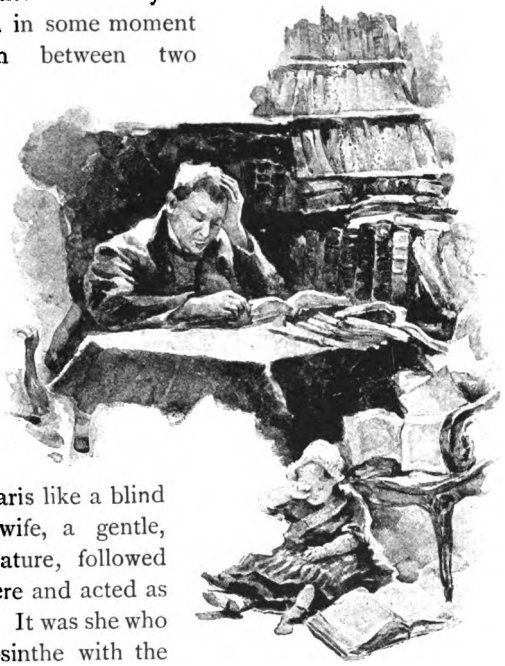
was Philoxène, taking notes while his brats wrangled around him. For he was married, he did not quite know why or how; and even in some moment of abstraction between two studies, had had children. Over excited by his one idea, talking aloud to himself with a vacant gaze, lost in his dreams, he wandered through Paris like a blind man. His wife, a gentle, saddened creature, followed him everywhere and acted as his Antigone. It was she who mixed his absinthe with the utmost care; a mild absinthe scarcely tinted with the green opal coloured



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liquid, for the poetic enthusiast had no need of stimulants. She was to be seen also, seated in the front row at the conferences held by Philoxène, always upon Shakespeare, in the hall on the Quay Malaquais. Sometimes the right word would not come. Painful spectacle! in vain the orator sought for it, in vain he knit his brow; every one felt that in that encumbered brain, ideas and phrases jostled each other, unable to make their escape, like a frightened crowd struggling at a door in a fire. The wife, guessing the missing word, would softly and maternally prompt it. The phrase was started, flew forth, and then in the midst of this painful improvisation, of this frenzied gesticulation, there would be flashes of brilliance, and brief bursts of eloquence. There was a true poet within this gentle lunatic. Philoxène ended sadly, working at obscure writings to earn a bare pittance and the wherewithal to buy books, always dreaming of his great study without being able to write it. For he would fain read everything written upon Shakespeare; and every day there appeared in Germany or England works which distanced him, obliging him to put

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off once more till some other day the commencement of his own book. He died, leaving as the only outcome of his life's work, two short acts written in collaboration with Théodore de Banville, an unfinished *Polichinelle*, sufficiently original in fancy, and since then reshaped by the makers of such things; and a volume of verses, gathered together and published by the tender care of his friends. A situation as post-mistress was obtained for his widow, who, after long mourning her poet, married again some two years ago, you will never guess whom—the postman.

Was I not right to draw your attention to Philoxène and his wife? For myself, I can never forgot them, and I see them still, shy and timid, in a corner of the little drawing-room: he, agitated by spasms of nervousness, she, holding her breath with astonishment, while Pagans, just returned from the country of the orange and the lemon, sang Spanish songs, and Madame de Chodsko poured out a pale and vapid decoction called tea—real exile's tea—for the handsome Polish women whose heavy bright russet locks lay twisted

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in great masses at the back of the head. As midnight struck the excellent M. Chodsko appeared with the regularity of a cuckoo in a clock, bed candle in hand, at the door, cast over the company a comprehensive glance,

mumbled with a strong Slav accent: "Good evening, gentlemen," to people who were never even introduced to him and whom he never knew, and then disappeared mechanically among the folds of a portière.

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The longing to show off my coat led me sometimes further afield,—right away,—to the other end of Paris, on the opposite side of the Seine. To get there, one followed the quays for some distance, greeted by the odour of wild beasts, and the roaring of the lions

from behind the railing of the Jardin des Plantes; then over a bridge, from which one contemplated by the gaslight or the moonlight, the fantastic frontage and quaintly pierced spire of the ruins of the Hôtel Lavalette; next came the Arsenal, the old Arsenal, now a library, with its long iron railings, its great flight of steps, its doorway of

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the time of Vauban, decorated with sculptured representations of old-fashioned cannon, and rich, to this day, in recollections of Charles Nodier. Nodier, was no longer there, the famous little green drawing-room where romanticism had its beginning, where Musset, Hugo and Georges Sand shed tears over the adventures of Brisquet's dog—the little green drawing-room more celebrated, and justly so, than the blue drawing-room of Arthénice, was at this time occupied by M. Eugène Loudun.

The spirit of revolution and liberty of thought floated no longer among the curtains. After the champions of romance, had come workmen poets, Christian versifiers, stealing into this eighth palace of the King of Bohemia. Of the old romantic school, only one remained, faithful and unfaltering at his post, stiff and upright in his frock-coat, like an old Huguenot soldier in his armour.

This was Amédée Pommier, a wonderful manufacturer of words and rhymes, the friend of the Dondeys and the Pétrus Borels, the author of *L'Enfer*, of *Crâneries et Dettes de Cœur*—fine books with flaring

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titles, delight of the literary, horror of the academies, and full of verses, noisy and gaudy as a flight of tropical birds.

Amédée Pommier was a poor and worthy fellow. He led a secluded life, gaining his daily bread by making, for the firm of Hachette, translations which he did not even sign. One curious detail must not be overlooked: it was in collaboration with Amédée Pommier that Balzac, always tormented by the desire to write a great classic comedy, had undertaken *Orgon*, five acts in verse, as a sequel to *Tartufe*.

It was also in the green drawing-room of the Arsenal that I became acquainted with M. Henri de Bornier. He often recited wittily turned little poems, one amongst others I particularly remember, of which each verse ended with this refrain: "Ah! ah! I am not such a fool!" Not such a fool indeed was M. Bornier! for it is he who has written *La Fille de Roland*, which met with so much success at the Théâtre Français and which should some day bring its author to a chair in the Academy. On certain evenings there was a great commotion;

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screens were arranged, chairs and armchairs arrayed in line, and charades acted. I even, I must confess, have figured in these charades, and I can still see myself dressed as a Circassian slave, shrouded in long, flowing white veil, in the middle of a Turkish market. Madame Bornier was my companion in slavery, while M. Bornier in turban and caftan, represented some kind of sultan who purchased us. As for the slave dealer who sold us, it was, saving your presence, no less a person than M. L——, senator, quondam minister, much before the public at that time and convicted since of financial irregularities. The fall of the Empire held many surprises in store for us; and the great highways of Paris have sometimes strange windings.

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MY DRUMMER.

I WAS at home, and still in bed, one morning, when there was a knock at the door.

"Who's there?"

"A man with a large case!"

I naturally fancied that some parcel had arrived from the railway, but instead of the looked-for railway porter, a little man with the round hat and the short jacket of the Provençal shepherd greeted my eyes in the yellow light of the November day. I beheld two black eyes, anxious and gentle, an obstinate, and at the same time, ingenuous face, half lost behind thick moustaches, an accent

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flavoured with garlic, savouring outrageously of the sunny south. The man said,

"I am Buisson," and held out an envelope, on which I immediately recognized the pretty and regular handwriting of the poet, Frédéric Mistral. His letter was brief. "I send you friend Buisson; he is a performer on the drum, and wishes to make himself known in Paris. Pilot him."

Pilot a drummer! These southerners have no conscience!

Having read the letter, I turned to Buisson.

"So you are a drummer?"

"Yes, M. Daudet, and the best of them all; you shall see!"

He went to fetch his instruments, which he had discreetly left on the landing, behind the door: a small, long, flat box, and a large cylinder covered with green baize, the same shape and size as the immense *tourniquets* that the sellers of sweet wafers drag about the streets. The small flat box contained the *galoubet*, the simple rustic flute or fife, which says "tu—tu," while the drum growls "pan—pan." The covered cylinder was the tabor (or drum) itself. What a drum it was!

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Tears came into my eyes when I saw it unwrapped: a real authentic tabor of Louis XIV.'s time, touching and comical at the same time in its hugeness, and growling like an old man if only the tip of a finger touched it. It was made of fine walnut wood, ornamented with light carvings, polished, slight, light, sonorous, and mellowed as it were by the touch of time. Solemn as a judge, Buisson hung his tabor over his left arm, took up the flute between three fingers of his left hand, (you have seen the attitude and the instrument in some antiquated engravings of the eighteenth century, or painted on a plate of old *Moustier*,) and handling with the right hand the little stick tipped with ivory, he attacked the large drum, which, with its sonorous vibrations, and its sharp whirr like that of a grasshopper, marked the rhythm, and formed a deep bass accompaniment to the sharp and shrill warbling of the flute. "Tu—tu—pan—pan! Lo! Paris was far off, and so was winter. I was transported to Provence, to the shores of a blue sea, under the shade of the poplars of the Rhone; serenades of the night and of the dawn

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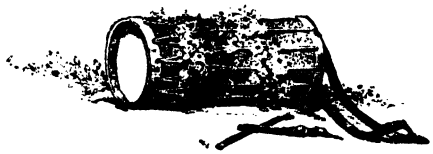
resounded beneath the windows. I heard the singing of carols, saw the country dances of the *Olivettes*, of the *farandole* winding beneath the leafy plane-trees of the village greens, along the dusty whiteness of the high roads, amongst the lavender of the sunburnt hill sides; disappearing, reappearing, more and more impassioned and fantastic, while the drummer followed slowly, with even



step, sure that the dance would not forsake the music by the way; solemn, grave, and hobbling a little, with the movement of the knee, which at every step pushes the drum on in front of him.

So many things in the beat of a drum!

Yes! and many more, that you, perhaps, could not have seen, but which to me were vividly present. Such is the Provençal imagination: made of tinder, and inflammable,

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even at seven o'clock in the morning; and Mistral did right in counting upon my enthusiasm.

Buisson also became excited. He told

me of his struggles, his efforts, and how, midway on the downward path, he had saved fife and drum from desecration.

Some barbarians, it appeared, wished to

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improve the fife by adding two holes to it—a fife with five holes! what a sacrilege! He held religiously to the fife with three holes—the fife of his ancestors, without nevertheless fearing any rival in the suavity of his slurs, or the vivacity of his variations and shakes.

"It occurred to me," said he with a modest air of vague inspiration, and with that particular accent of the south which renders comical, even the most touching of funeral orations. "It occurred to me at night, one time when I was sitting under an olive tree, and listening to the nightingale; and I thought to myself: What! Buisson! can a wild bird of the good God's sing like that, and what it can do with one hole, art thou not man enough to manage with three?" Somewhat stupid in its pomposity, no doubt, this platitude, but that morning it struck me as charming.

A good southerner cannot thoroughly enjoy an emotion unless he can share it with others. I admired Buisson: others must admire him also. Behold me then, rushing all over Paris, showing off my drummer, presenting him everywhere as a phenomenon;

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hunting up friends, organizing a *soirée* at my own house. Buisson played and related his struggles, and again said, "It occurred to me." He was decidedly fond of that phrase, and my friends were kind enough, on hearing him, to appear marvellously struck by his talent.

But this was only the first step. At that time a play of mine, a Provençal play, was being rehearsed at the Ambigu. I recommended Buisson, his drum and his fife, to Hostein, the *impresario*, and you may fancy with what eloquence! During eight days, I ceaselessly extolled him. At last Hostein said,

"Suppose we put your drummer into the play? It wants a peg to catch the fancy of the public."

I am sure the Provençal lost his sleep from excitement. The next day, we all three got into a cab; he, the drum, and myself, and, at twelve for the quarter past, as the notices of rehearsal say, we were deposited amid a crowd of idlers, gathered together by the strange appearance of the machine, in front of that low, shamefaced

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little door-way, which in even the most luxurious theatres, serves as the unostentatious entrance alike for authors, actors, and underlings of all kinds.

"Good Heavens, how dark it is!" sighed the Provençal, as we followed the long passage; —damp and windy as all theatre passages— "how dark it is, and how cold!"

The drum seemed of the same opinion, knocking itself against all the windings of the passages, the steps of the corkscrew staircase, with many vibrations and much formidable rumbling. At last, limping and hobbling, we reached the stage. The rehearsal had begun. Thus seen, in all the barrenness of its undress, a theatre presents a most disenchanting appearance; devoid of movement and life, without the tinsel and brightness of the evening, full of busy folk stepping softly, and their low-voiced talk sounding as far off as if it came from shades on the banks of the Styx, or miners at the bottom of a mine. A smell of mouldy damp, and of escaping gas pervaded everything. Men and things, the moving crowd, all were fantastically mixed up with the scenery, and

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all wore the same dust-coloured hue, in the mean and paltry light of small hanging lamps,

and gas jets protected with wire gauze, like Davy lamps. And, as if to make the darkness more heavy, the subterranean sensation

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more forcible, from time to time, far aloft, on the second or third tier of the darkened house, the door of a box would open, and, as if from the far away mouth of a well, let fall a ray of external light. This sight, new to my countryman, slightly unnerved him. But my fine fellow soon recovered himself, and pluckily took his place, alone in the shadow at the back of the stage, on a barrel that had been got ready for him. With his drum, it had the effect of two barrels, one on the top of another. In vain did I protest: in vain did I say: "In Provence the drummers play as they walk, and your barrel is impossible." Hostein assured me that my drummer was a strolling minstrel, and that a minstrel could only be represented on the stage on a barrel. Very well! then have the barrel! Moreover, Buisson, full of self-reliance, had already clambered up, and was stamping about to find a steady balance, saying to me: "It does not matter!" We left him therefore, his fife at his lips, his drum-stick in his hand, behind a dense forest of scenery, side pieces, pulleys and ropes; and we all, director, author, and actors,

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settled ourselves in the front of the stage, as far off as possible, the better to judge the effect.

"It occurred to me—" sighed Buisson from out of the darkness, "it occurred to me at night, one time when I was sitting under an olive tree, listening to the nightingale—"

"That will do, that will do; play us something!" I cried out, already exasperated by his phrase.

Tu—tu—! Pan—Pan—!

"Hush! he is beginning."

"We shall be able to judge of the effect!"

Great heavens! what an effect was produced upon this sceptical audience, by this rustic music, bleating and shrill as the noise of an insect, buzzing over there in a corner! I saw the jeering actors, always professionally delighting in the failure of a comrade, ironically pucker up their smooth lips: the fireman under his gas jet, was laughing fit to split his sides; the prompter himself, drawn out of his usually somnolescent state by the strangeness of the occurrence, raised himself up on both hands, and peered out of his box, looking like a gigantic tortoise. However, Buisson having finished playing, again began his

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phrase, which he apparently thought very telling:

"What! can a wild bird of the good God's sing like that, and what it can do with one hole, art thou not man enough to manage with three!"

"What is this fellow of yours talking about, with his story of holes?" asked Hostein.

Then I tried to explain the point of the matter, the importance of the three holes instead of five; the originality there was in playing alone, the two instruments. "The fact is," observed Marie Laurent, "it would be infinitely more convenient if they were played by two persons."

I tried, in order to strengthen my argument, to sketch out a *farandole* step on the stage. It was of no avail, I began vaguely to understand the sad truth, that, to make others feel the impressions and poetical recollections evoked in my bosom by the drummer and his old-fashioned airs, the musician should have been able to bring at the same time to Paris, the top of a hill side, a space of blue sky, a whiff of the warm Provençal atmosphere: "Come, my children, get on, get on!

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And without bestowing any further notice on the drummer, the rehearsal continued. Buisson never stirred, and remained at his post, feeling certain of success, and honestly believing that he was already acting a part in the play. After the first act, a feeling of remorse came over me, at leaving him over there on his barrel, where only his outline could vaguely be seen.

"Come, Buisson, get down, quick."

"Are we going to begin?"

The unfortunate fellow thought he had made a wonderful effect, and showed me a stamped paper, an agreement already prepared with the foresight characteristic of the peasant.

"No, not to-day; they will write to you; but take care! hang it! your drum knocks against everything, and makes a frightful row." I felt now quite ashamed of the drum, I trembled lest any one should hear it, and oh! what a joy and relief it was, when I got it back into the cab! For a week I did not venture to return to the theatre.

Shortly afterwards, Buisson came again to see me.

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"Well! how about that agreement?"

"That agreement? Ah yes! that agreement. Well, Hostein hesitates; he does not understand."

"He's a fool!"

On hearing the bitter and harsh tone in which the gentle musician pronounced these words, I realized the extent of my crime. Intoxicated by my enthusiasm, and my praise; his equilibrium upset, and losing all sense of proportion, the Provençal drummer seriously believed himself a great genius, and expected—alas! had I not led him to expect it—that Paris held in store for him endless triumphs.

How could one stop a drum, uproariously careering through the rocks and thorny thickets of the slopes of imagination!

I did not even attempt it: it would have been madness, and labour lost.

Moreover, Buisson had now found some other admirers, and amongst the greatest celebrities,—Felicien David, and Théophile Gautier, to whom Mistral had written at the same time as to me. Poetic and dreamy spirits, easily charmed, prone to abstraction,

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the author of a *Journey in the East*, and the musician of the land of roses, had found no trouble in creating in their minds' eye a landscape around the rustic melodies of the drummer.

The one fancied, while the fife piped away, that he saw once more the shores of his native Durance, and the half ruined terraces on the slopes of Cadenet: while the dreams of the other carried him still further away, and he found in the dull and monotonous sound of the drum I know not what charming memories of nights at the Golden Horn and of Arab *derboukas*.

Both had been smitten with a sudden and violent caprice for Buisson's real talent, here however so out of harmony with all its surroundings.

For a whole fortnight there were incessant puffs in the newspapers about the drummer; the illustrated papers were full of his portraits, in an attitude of proud defiance, and a conquering look, the light flute between his fingers, the drum slung over his shoulder. Intoxicated with his success, Buisson bought the papers by the dozen, and despatched them to his own country.

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From time to time, he came to see me and to relate his triumphs: smoking parties made up for him in some artists' studios, a few evenings spent in fashionable society in the Faubourg Saint Germain (he was full of the Faubourg de Séïnt Germéïn, as he called it), where the fellow brought back tender dreams to the old turbaned dowagers, as he repeated without the slightest bashfulness his famous phrase: "It occurred to me at night, one time, when I was sitting under an olive tree and listening to the nightingale." Meanwhile, as he was afraid of getting rusty, and wished, in spite of the thousand amusements of an artist's life, to keep up the mellowness of his touch and the delicacy of his mouthpiece, our ingenious Provençal conceived the idea of rehearsing his serenades and his *farandoles*, in the very heart of Paris, on the fifth floor of the furnished lodgings he

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was occupying in the Quartier Breda. Tu—tu! Pan—pan! The whole Quartier protested wrathfully against this unwarrantable disturbance. The neighbours gathered together and made a formal complaint; but

Buisson only continued the more, spreading around him a wide circle of harmony and sleeplessness; till one evening the door porter, utterly worn out, refused him the key of his room.

Draping himself in all the dignity of an

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artist, Buisson appealed to the magistrates, and gained his cause. French laws, so hard on musicians, relegating the performance on the horn to the depths of the cellars all the year round, with the exception of Shrove Tuesday, allowing them only one day out of three hundred and sixty-five on which to flourish their brass instruments in the open air; the French law it appears, had not foreseen the Provençal drum.

After this victory Buisson no longer doubted his own powers. One Sunday morning I received a card: that afternoon he was going to make his appearance at a large concert in the Salle du Châtelet. Duty and friendship compelled my attendance, I therefore went to hear him, not without a secret misgiving, and sad forebodings.

A capital house, full from the pit to the roof; decidedly our puffs and notices had borne fruit. Suddenly, amid the general excitement and breathless silence, the curtain drew up. I uttered a cry of amazement. Alone, in the centre of the stage, on which six hundred supernumeraries can be manœuvred without crowding, stood Buisson and

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his drum, dressed up in a skimpy coat and wearing a pair of gloves which made him look like those long, yellow-legged insects that Granville (the famous caricaturist) portrays in his whimsical drawings, furiously playing on the most fantastical instruments. Buisson alone stood before us. I could see him through the opera glass, waving his long arms, fluttering his elytra; evidently the unhappy fellow was playing, drumming with all his might, blowing with all his strength; but not the faintest note reached the audience. It was too far off, all the sound was swallowed up by the stage. It was like a baker's cricket chirping his serenade in the middle of the Champ de Mars! Impossible to count the flute holes at this distance, impossible to repeat the phrase: "It occurred to me," or to mention the "bird of the good God's!"

I blushed with mortification. Around me I saw nothing but amazement, and I heard the muttered words, "What poor joke is this?" The doors of the boxes slammed, the house, little by little, was emptying; however as it was a polite audience, they did not hiss him, but quietly left the drummer to end his tune in solitude.

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I waited for him at the door to console him. Well! would you believe it! He fancied he had had an immense success, and more radiant than ever, exclaimed, "I am waiting for Colonne to sign!" at the same time showing me a large paper covered with official stamps. This time it was more than I could bear, I plucked up my courage and said roughly, all in a breath, what I thought.

"Buisson, we have all been mistaken in trying to make Paris understand the charm of your large drum; the melody of your fife. I have made a mistake, Gautier and David have made a mistake, and, as a natural consequence, you also have made a mistake. No, you are not the nightingale."

"It occurred to me," interrupted Buisson.

"Yes, I know it occurred to you, but you are not a nightingale. The nightingale sings everywhere, his songs are the songs of every country, and in every country his songs are understood. You are only a poor little cicala, whose monotonous and dry note is in harmony with the pale olive trees, the pines weeping their rosin in tears of gold, the brilliant blue sky, the glorious

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sun, the stony hill-sides of Provence; but here, under this gray sky, midst rain and wind, you are nothing but a ridiculous, lamentable grasshopper with long damp wings. Return home, take back your drum, sing your love songs by daybreak and by twilight, play to the girls while they dance their *farandoles*, lead the triumphal march of the conquerors in the bull fights; down there you are a poet, an artist; here you are nothing but a misunderstood mountebank."

He did not answer, but in his mystic glance, in his gently obstinate eye, I read his thought: "My friend, you are jealous of me!"

A few days later, my fine fellow, proud as "Artaban," came to tell me that Colonne—another fool, like Hostein!—had refused to sign, but that another affair was offered to him, marvellous this time, an engagement in a *café* concert at a hundred and twenty francs a night, all settled and signed beforehand. He showed me the paper. Ah! what a capital paper! I learnt the truth later on.

I know not what puzzled director, borne away and blinded by the muddy current of bankruptcy, desperately seized upon that

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broken reed—Buisson's pitiful music. Certain that he would never pay, he signed all that was asked. But the Provençal did not see so far ahead; he had it down on stamped paper, and this stamped paper was sufficient for his happiness. Moreover, as it was a music hall, a costume was necessary.

"They have dressed me up as a Troubadour of the olden time," he said with a gracious smile, "but as I am very well made, it suits me, you will see." I did see!

It was one of those music halls near the Porte Saint Denis, so much in vogue during the last years of the Empire; with the tinsel of the barbarous ornamentation, half Chinese, half Persian; its daubs and gilding rendered more glaring by the exaggerated number of gas jets and lustres, and with closed and latticed boxes, in which, on certain evenings, duchesses and ambassadresses hid themselves to applaud the strange contortions or vulgar songs of some eccentric diva. A sea of heads and beer glasses all levelled like waves in foggy weather by the dense smoke of the pipes and the vapour of breath; the waiters running about, the consumers shouting their orders; and all

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dominated by the orchestra leader, white-tied, impassible and dignified, raising or calming with the gesture of a Neptune, the tempest of fifty brass instruments. Between the ridiculously sentimental song, bleated out by a somewhat pretty girl, with sheepish eyes; and an eclogue as hot as cayenne pepper, cynically bawled by a kind of Thérèsa with red arms, there appeared on the stage, in front of a semi-circle of some six simpering and yawning women in low white dresses, a personage whose appearance in all my life long I shall never forget. It was Buisson, the fife between his fingers, the drum on his left knee, in Troubadour costume, as he had threatened. But what a Troubadour! A jerkin (imagine such a thing!) half apple-green, half blue; one leg red, the other yellow, the whole attire so tight fitting that it made one shudder; a crenelated cap, shoes turned up like a jester's; and with all this, moustaches, his magnificent moustaches, too long and too black, which he could not bring himself to sacrifice, falling over his chin like a cascade of blacking!

Carried away apparently by the exquisite

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taste of this costume, the public greeted the musician with a long murmur of applause, and my Troubadour smirked with pleasure, and was happy at seeing before him this sympathetic audience, and feeling at his back a warm glow of inflammatory glances from the admiring and lovely creatures seated in a half-circle behind him. It was quite another affair however when the music began. The tu-tu, pan-pan, failed to please the vitiated taste of ears surfeited by the vitriol-like *repertoire* of the place, as a palate loses its discrimination by the abuse of spirits. Then too it was not a distinguished and well-mannered company like that at the Châtelet. "Enough! Enough! Take him away! Shut up, squeaker!" Vainly did Buisson try to open his mouth and to say: "It occurred to me." The audience rose, the curtain had to be lowered, and the red, green, blue and yellow Troubadour, disappeared in a storm of hissing and hooting, like some poor draggled parrot, eddying round in a tropical hurricane.

Would you believe it? Buisson persisted! An illusion springs up quickly in a Provençal

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brain, and is difficult to uproot. Fifteen evenings running he reappeared, always hissed, never paid; till the moment arrived when the sheriff's officer came to fix a notice of bankruptcy upon the open iron work of the concert hall gates.

Then began the downfall of Buisson. From one low pothouse to another, lower and lower still, always believing in his success, always pursuing his chimera of an engagement made on stamped paper, the drummer trundled at last to the tea-gardens of the suburbs, where the players are only paid by the hour, have no other orchestra than a toothless piano, and form the delight of a public composed of tipsy and tired canoeists and counterjumpers out for their Sunday holiday.

One evening—the winter was scarcely over and the spring not yet begun—I was crossing the Champs Elysées. An open air concert, wishing to get the start of the others, had already hung its lanterns in the still leafless trees. There was a slight drizzle, an air of melancholy over all. Suddenly I heard Tu—Tu—Pan—Pan!— There he was again! I saw him through the opening,

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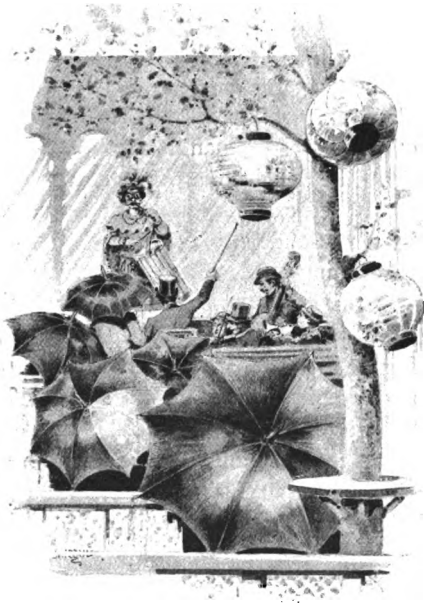
drumming away at a Provençal air, before some half dozen auditors, favoured no doubt with orders, and sheltering themselves under umbrellas. I dare not go in! "It was my fault," I thought, "after all! The fault of my imprudent enthusiasm." Poor Buisson! Poor half-drowned grasshopper!



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"TARTARIN DE TARASCON."

THE STORY OF MY BOOKS.

ALTHOUGH it is now nearly fifteen years since I published the *Adventures of Tartarin*, Tarascon has not yet forgiven me for writing them; and travellers worthy of belief assure me that every morning, when that tiny Provençal town opens the shutters of its shops and shakes its carpets in the balmy breath of the great Rhone, there breaks forth from every threshold and from every window, a united fury of clenched fists and flaming black eyes, one vast cry of rage directed towards Paris. "Oh that Daudet! If for

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once he came this way!" As Bluebeard says in the story, "Come down, or I come up."

And without joking, one day, Tarascon did "come up!"

It was in 1878, when Provincials swarmed in the hotels, on the boulevards, and on that gigantic bridge connecting the Champ de Mars and the Trocadéro. One morning, the sculptor Amy, a native of Tarascon, naturalized in Paris, beheld, piercing their way into his house, a formidable pair of moustaches, arrived by the excursion train, under pretext of seeing the Exhibition, but in reality to have an explanation with Daudet on the subject of the brave Commandant Bravida, and the *Défense de Tarascon*, a little tale published by me during the war.

"*Qué?*—we will go to that Daudet!"

It was always the first word of those Tarascon moustaches on entering the studio; and for a whole fortnight, the sculptor Amy had this phrase ringing in his ears: "And now then, where shall we find that Daudet?" The unfortunate artist was at his wits' end to find any way of sparing me this serio-comic visit. He took the moustaches of his

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compatriot to the Exhibition, lost them in the gallery of "dwellings of all nations," in the machinery department; poured down their throat English beer, Hungarian wines, mares' milk, and every exotic and varied drink he could find; deafened them with music of all kinds: Moorish, Tzigane, Japanese; worried them, tired them to death, and dragged them —like Tartarin on his minaret—to the summit of the Trocadéro turrets.

But the enmity of the Provençal rankled deep, and even from this lofty height, spying over Paris, he said with a frown,

"Can we see his house?"

"Whose house?"

"*Tè!*—why Daudet's of course!"

It was the same thing everywhere. Happily the excursion train got up steam again, and carried away the unsatisfied vengeance of the Tarascon; but although that one had departed, others might arrive, and all the time the Exhibition was open, I never slept.

It is a serious affair, after all, to feel concentrated upon one's self the hatred of a whole town. Even now, whenever I go

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south, I feel an awkwardness in passing Tarascon; I know they still bear me a grudge, that my books are prohibited in their libraries, are not even to be found at the railway bookstalls; and from the first moment I behold through the railway carriage window the castle of good King Réné, I feel myself ill at ease, and long to whisk past that station.

This is why I seize the opportunity afforded me by this new edition, to offer publicly with my apologies, to the people of Tarascon, the explanation which the former commander-in-chief of their militia came at that time to demand of me.

Tarascon was for me only a pseudonym picked up on the way from Paris to Marseilles, because it had a fine sonorous roll in the accent of the South, and sounded as the name of the station was shouted, like the triumphant war-cry of an Apache warrior. In reality, the home of Tartarin, and the scene of the famous cap-shooting parties is a little farther off, five or six leagues on the other side of the Rhone. There it was that as a child, I watched the baobab tree, lan-

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guishing in the confinement of its tiny mignonette pot, faithful image of my hero, cramped within the precincts of his little town; there the Rebuffas sang the duet from *Robert le Diable;* from thence it was, in short, that in November, 1861, Tartarin and I, armed to the teeth and *chechia* on head, started to hunt the lion in Africa. To tell the truth, I did not go there altogether expressly for that purpose, being desirous above all things, of repairing my somewhat dilapidated lungs in the warm sunshine. But not in vain, heaven be praised, was I born in the land of the mighty cap-shooters! and from the moment I set foot on the deck of the *Zouave*, where they were getting on board our enormous case of arms, I imagined, more Tartarin than Tartarin himself, that I was going to exterminate all the wild beasts of the Atlas.

Ah, what a fairy tale was that first voyage! How vividly I can recall the moment of departure; the blue sea before me—blue as cobalt—all ruffled by the wind, flecked with sparkling spray, and the bowsprit of the vessel, which again and again rose in the air,

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dipped in the wave, trembled a moment all white with foam, and ever pointed seawards; once more I hear in the broad sunlight, the hour of noon strike from all the clocks of Marseilles, and once more my twenty years of life ring in my head a joyous peal.

Merely to speak of it, brings it all before me again: I am over there, I haunt the bazaars of Algiers in a semi-daylight which is scented with musk, amber, dried rose leaves and warm woollen stuffs. Three-stringed guzlas are twanging before the little glass-fronted Tunisian cupboards, arabesqued in mother-o'-pearl, while the plash of the fountain throws a fresh note of sound upon the tiles of the court-yard. I see myself ranging the Sahel, the orange groves of Blidah, the Chiffa, the famous brook of monkeys; wandering over the green slopes of Milianah, its orchards tangled with bottle-gourds, sunflowers and fig-trees, as in the walled enclosures of our own Provence.

Once more the immense valley of Chélif lies before me, with its thick brushwood of lentisk and dwarf palms, and the dry beds of torrents edged with oleanders; on the hori-

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zon, the smoke of a camp fire rises straight upwards from a thicket of cactus, nearer, the gray circle trampled by a caravan, a saint's tomb with its white turban-like cupola, its thank-offerings hung on the dazzling, white-washed wall, and here and there, in the wide,

burnt-up space, a few dark, moving spots which I know to be cattle.

I hear again, accompanied by the horrible shaking of my Arab saddle, the clink of my great stirrups, the cry of the shepherds rebounding through the still and clear at-

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mosphere: "*Si mohame—e—ed—i*," the furious barking of the *slougi* dogs round the camps, the firing and howling of an Arab *fantasia* and the wild music of *derboukas*, played in the evening before the tent doors, while jackals yelp in the plains, persevering like our grasshoppers, and above all rises in the star-spangled blackness of the night sky, a faint crescent of the moon—the crescent of Mohammed. Very distinct too in my memory is the dreariness of the return; the feeling of exile and cold on arriving at Marseilles, where the blue of our Provençal sky seemed to me dulled and veiled by comparison with those clear and vast Algerian skies, filled as they were with the most intense and varied range of colour: with the wonderful green of the sunrise—a poisonous, arsenical green; with the brief twilights of the evening changing and trembling through mother-o'-pearl tints of purple and amethyst; where the wells were rose-coloured, and rose-coloured camels came to drink, and the chain of the well and the beard of the Bedouin who drank from the same bucket, all glittered with rose-tinted drops;—after a lapse of

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twenty years, I feel again the regret and longing for the breadth of that African sunshine left behind me.

There is in the language of the poet Mistral, a word which comprises and defines clearly a whole instinct of the race: *galéja*, to joke, to make fun. And it conveys to the mind the flash of irony, the sparkle of malice, shining in the depths of the Provençal eyes. *Galéja* recurs on all occasions in the conversation, in the form of a verb or substantive. "*Vessés pas? Es uno galéjado.* Don't you see? It is only a joke. *Taisoté, galéjairé.* Hold your tongue, naughty jester." But to be *galéjairé* does not exclude from the character either kindness or tenderness. They amuse themselves, *té!* they must laugh; but in that country, laughter is the accompaniment of every sentiment, of the deepest as of the most tender. In an old, old song of my beloved mother-country, the history of little Fleurance, this Provençal love of laughter is exquisitely exemplified. Fleurance, when almost a child, is betrothed to a knight, who marries her, *la prén tan jouveneto se saup pas courdela*, when so young

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that she can scarcely tie for herself the lacing of her bodice. Scarcely is the honeymoon over when Fleurance's lord is obliged to start for Palestine, leaving his little bride all alone. Seven years pass by, and the knight has given no sign of life, when one day, a pilgrim with cockle shell and long beard presents himself at the gate of the castle. He has returned from the wars; he brings news of the husband of Fleurance; and at once the fair lady causes him to be admitted and places him him at table opposite to her.

What happened between them then I can relate to you in two ways; for the story of Fleurance, like all popular songs, has made the round of France in the pedlars' packs, and I found it in Picardy with a significant variation. In the Picardy version the lady begins to weep in the middle of the feast.

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"You weep, fair Fleurance?" says the pilgrim all trembling.

"I weep because I recognize you—you are my dear husband."

The little Fleurance of Provence, on the

contrary, is scarcely seated in front of the pilgrim with the great beard, before she begins to laugh delightfully at him, "*Hé!* what are you laughing at, Fleurance?" "*Té!* I laugh because you are my husband."

And laughing she jumps upon his knee.

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and the pilgrim also laughs in his sham beard of tow ; for he is, as she is, a *galéjaïré ;* all of which does not prevent them from loving each other tenderly, with open arms, with meeting lips, with all the pent emotion of their faithful hearts.

I too am a *galéjaïré.* In the fogs of Paris, in the splashing of her mud, in the sadness lurking in a great city, I may perhaps have lost the taste and faculty of laughter ; but in reading *Tartarin,* any one may see that there then remained in me a store of gaiety which promptly broke forth in the glorious sunlight of "*down there.*"

Certainly, I am willing to admit that many other things might have been written about Algerian France, than the *Adventures of Tartarin ;* for instance, a close and incisive study of manners and customs, the observations of a new country on the confines of two races and two civilizations, with their reflex action ; the conqueror conquered in his turn by the climate, by the profoundly indolent habits, the carelessness, the utter rottenness of the East, the bastinado and thieving, the Algerian Doineau and the Algerian

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Bazaine—those two perfect products of the Arab *bureau.* What revelations might be made of the wretchedness of this pioneer existence, this history of a colonist; the foundation of a town in the midst of the rivalry of three presiding powers, army, civil administration, and magistracy. Instead of all that, I brought back nothing but *Tartarin*, a burst of laughter, a *galéjade.*

It is true that my comrade and I must have appeared a fine pair of simpletons, when we landed in red sashes and gaudy *chechia* in the famous town of Algiers, where we were the only two "*Teurs.*" With what a meditative air of conviction did Tartarin doff his immense hunting boots at the doors of the mosques and gravely penetrate into the sanctuaries of Mohammed, with tight shut lips and in bright coloured socks. Ah! how thoroughly he at least believed in the East, in the muezzins and the almées, in the lions, the panthers, and the dromedaries; in everything that his books had been kind enough to suggest to him, and which his meridional imagination had magnified and exaggerated.

Faithful as the camel of my story, I

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followed him through his heroic dream; but I had my moments of doubt. I remember one evening, at Oued-Fodda, starting off to lie in wait for a lion, how, passing through a camp of *chasseurs d'Afrique*, with all our paraphernalia of spatterdashes, guns, revolvers and hunting knives, I felt a sharp sensation of ridicule, when I saw the silent amazement of these worthy troopers cooking their soup in front of the long lines of tents. "And what if after all there is no lion!"

Nevertheless, an hour later, when night had fallen, hiding on my knees in a clump of laurels, sweeping the dark shadows with my glasses, while the cry of the crane sounded high up in the sky, and the jackals trampled the vegetation around me, I felt my gun chatter and rattle on the handle of the hunting knife stuck in the ground.

I have invested Tartarin with this shiver of fear, and the absurd reflections which accompany it; but it is doing him a great injustice. I can honestly assure you, that if the lion had really come, the worthy Tartarin would have received him rifle in hand, dagger upraised; and if his ball had missed, his

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sword broken in the huge animal closing upon him, he would have finished the struggle hand to hand, would have crushed the fierce brute in the powerful muscles of his arms, and torn it to pieces, with his nails and his teeth, not even stopping to spit out the fur; for he was a tough fellow at bottom, this mighty shooter of caps, and moreover a man of humour who was the first to laugh at any *galéjade!*

The story of Tartarin was not written till long after my journey in Algeria. The journey took place in 1861-62, the book was written in 1869. I began to publish it in parts, in the *Petit Moniteur universel*, illustrated with amusing sketches by Emile Benassit. It was an absolute failure. The *Petit Moniteur* was a popular paper, and the populace are puzzled by printed irony which makes them think they are being laughed at. No words can describe the disappointment of the subscribers to this half-penny paper, who delighted in *Rocambole* and the writings of Ponson du Terrail; when they read in the first chapters of the life of Tartarin, of the songs, of the baobab tree; their disappoint-

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ment even expressed itself in personal abuse and threats of discontinued subscriptions. I used to receive letters which said: "Well then, what follows? What does all this prove? Idiot!" and then came a furious signature. Paul Dalloz suffered the most, for he had gone to great expense in advertisements, and illustrations, and paid dear for this experience. After a dozen or so of numbers had appeared, I took pity on him and carried *Tartarin* to the *Figaro*, whose readers were better fitted to understand it, but here it was met by other conflicting powers. The working editor of the *Figaro* just then, was Alexandre Duvernois, brother of Clément Duvernois quondam journalist and minister. By the merest chance I had, nine years before, in the course of my delightful expedition, met Alexandre Duvernois—at that time a humble clerk in the civil administration of Milianah, and who from that date retained a perfect enthusiasm for the whole Colony. Irritated and indignant at the frivolous spirit in which I wrote about his beloved Algeria, he arranged, although he could not prevent the publication of *Tartarin*, to cut it up into intermittent

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scraps, on the horrible stereotyped pretext of "press of matter," to such effect, that the poor little tale dragged its weary length in the paper, almost as interminably as the *Wandering Jew* or the *Three Musketeers.* "It drags, it drags," grumbled the deep bass of Villemessant, and I was greatly afraid I should be obliged to break off once more.

Then came fresh tribulations. The hero of my book was then called Barbarin of Tarascon.

Now, there unfortunately happened to live at Tarascon an old family of the name of Barbarin, who threatened to go to law with me if I did not at once take their name out of this outrageous piece of tomfoolery. Having a holy horror of courts of law, and justice generally, I agreed to replace Barbarin by Tartarin on the already corrected proofs, which had therefore to be re-read line by line in a most scrupulous hunt for the letter B. In those three hundred pages, a few managed to escape my notice, and you may find in the first edition, Bartarin, Tarbarin, and even *tonsoir* for *bonsoir.* At last the book was published, and succeeded well enough in the circulating library, not-

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withstanding the local flavour, which could not be to the taste of every one. One must be of the south, or know it very well indeed, to understand how frequent a type amongst us this Tartarin is, and how, under the glorious sunshine of Tarascon, which fills its people with warmth and electricity, the wild absurdity of brains and imagination, becomes developed in profoundly exaggerated forms, as varied in shape and dimensions as the fruit of the bottle-gourd.

Judged impartially, at a distance of years, *Tartarin*, with its careless and madcap style, seems to me to possess the qualities of youth, life and truth; a truth however of beyond the Loire, which exaggerates, dilates, but does not lie, and is Tarascon to the backbone all the time. The quality of the writing is neither very finished nor very concise. It is what I venture to call "peripatetic literature," spoken, gesticulated; accompanied by all the easy manners of my hero. But I must own, that with all my love of style, of fine prose, harmonious and full of life and colour, that this is not all that is needed, in my opinion, by the novelist. His truest joy must always

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be to create beings, to set on foot by their truth to nature types of humanity which shall thenceforward be known in the world by the name, the expression and gesture, he has bestowed upon them, and which have caused them to be talked of, detested, or liked, by those who read of them, without reference to their creator, or without so much as mentioning his name. For my own part, my emotion is always the same, when, *à propos* of some passer-by, one of the thousand marionnettes of our human comedy, political, artistic, or of the world, I hear it said, "He is a Tartarin—a Monpavon—a Delobelle." A thrill runs through me then, the proud thrill of a father, hidden amongst the crowd who applaud his son, and who, all the time is longing to exclaim, "That is my boy!"

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THE STORY OF MY BOOKS.

"LETTERS FROM MY WINDMILL."

On the road between Arles and the quarries of Fontvielle, after passing the Mont de Corde and the abbey of Montmajour, there rises, on the right-hand side, behind a large village, white with dust as a stone-cutter's yard, a small hillock covered with pine trees; a refreshing patch of green in the midst of the parched landscape. Up above, turned the long arms of a windmill; and below, nestling under the hillside was a

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large white house called Montauban, an old building of great originality, for, beginning like a great country house, with a flight of steps and an Italian terrace supported by columns, it finished with the walls of a *mas* or country farm, with perches for the peacocks, a vine over the doorway, a well with a fig tree twisting round the iron work, sheds under which lie harrows and ploughs, a sheep-pen in front of an orchard of slender almond trees, their branches of delicate pink flowers continually scattered by the March winds. These are the only flowers of Montauban. There are no lawns, no flower beds, no gardens, no enclosures; nothing but clumps of pine trees starting from amongst the gray rocks, a natural and wild park, full of tangled pathways, all slippery with the dry and fallen pine needles. Inside the building existed the same incongruous mixture of mansion and farm; there were long galleries, flagged and cool, furnished with cane-twisted sofas and armchairs of the time of Louis XVI., so well suited for a summer siesta: spacious stairs, imposing corridors, where the wind dashes in, and

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whistling under the doors of the rooms shakes the old-fashioned striped hangings. Then, on going up a couple of steps, a sudden transformation greets the eye; here is the large rustic kitchen of the farm, with its uneven floor of beaten earth, where the hens scratch to pick up the crumbs of the farm breakfast, and its whitewashed walls supporting the walnut-wood shelves and the quaintly carved bread box and kneading trough.

Twenty years ago, an old Provençal family lived there, no less original and delightful than their dwelling. The mother, a superior woman of the better class of farmer, old, but still upright, and wearing the widow's cap she would never discard, managed entirely the extensive property, consisting of olive trees, wheat, vines and mulberry trees; near her, were her four sons, four old bachelors known by the names of the professions they had practised or were still exercising: the Mayor, the Consul, the Notary, the Lawyer. When their father died, and their sister married, they gathered all four closely round the old woman, sacrificing

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for her sake, their ambitions and their tastes; united in an all-powerful bond of love for her whom they spoke of as "dear Mamma," with a respectful and tender accent.

Excellent folks! fortunate household! How often have I come there in the winter months to put myself again in touch with nature, to shake off Paris and its fevered life, by the health-giving scents of our little Provençal hills. I arrived without any warning, certain of my welcome, heralded by the screams of the peacocks and the barking of the dogs.

Miracle, *Miraclet*, *Tambour*, jumping up round the dog-cart, while the Arlesian cap of the servant girl fluttered with surprise as she rushed off to inform her masters; and the "dear Mamma" pressed me to her little gray checked shawl as if I had been one of her own boys. After five tumultuous minutes, when the huggings were over, and my trunk

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was in my room, the house became again silent and calm. As for me I whistled to old Miracle—a spaniel picked up at sea on a piece of wreckage by the fishermen of Faraman—and went up to my windmill.

The windmill was a ruin, a mass of crumbling stone, iron, and rotten wood, which had not been set to the wind for many a year, and which lay all broken and out of gear, useless as a poet, while all around on the hill-side, the busy trade of the miller prospered, and sails went merrily round. What strange affinities lie within us! From the very first this abandoned mill was dear to me, I liked it for its forsaken air, its path overgrown with grass, the short mountain grasses, gray and perfumed, full of the little herbs with which Father Gaucher composes his elixir; its broken platform, where one

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might idly lie, sheltered from the wind, while a rabbit dashed past, or a long adder with creeping and sneaking motion came forth to hunt the field mice with which the ruins were swarming. With the gusts of the *tramontana* shaking the old building till it crackled again, whistling through its shattered sails as if through rigging, the wind-mill awoke in my uneasy and wandering brain memories of past sea voyages, of visits to lighthouses, and distant isles, and the quivering swell all round me completed the illusion. I know not whence I inherit this love of solitude and wild nature, but I have had it from childhood; it seemed so little in harmony with the exuberance of my spirits—unless it can be at the same time a physical necessity for me to repair by a fast of words, an abstinence from talk and gesticulation, the frightful expenditure of his whole being which is a Southerner's life. In any case, I owe much to these mental rests; and no place was ever more healthful to me than this old Provençal windmill. I even thought once of buying it; there might be found yet, among the papers of the notary of Fontvielle,

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an agreement of sale, which remained only a project, but of which I made use, as the preamble of my book.

My windmill never belonged to me. But this did not prevent me from spending there long days filled with dreams and recollections, till the sun sank among the little flattened hills, of which it filled the hollows as with molten metal, a casting of fiery and glowing gold. Then, at the sound of a conch-shell, the horn with which M. Séguin summoned home his goat, I returned for the evening repast, at the hospitable and fantastic table of Montauban, laid according to the tastes and habits of each member of the party: the Constantia drunk by the Consul, side by side with the water gruel, or the plate of boiled chestnuts which formed the frugal dinner of the old mother. The coffee drunk, pipes lighted and the four sons gone off to the village, I remained alone talking with the excellent woman—a good energetic character with a subtle intelligence and a memory full of stories, which she related with much simple eloquence: tales of her childhood, of the departed, of disused customs, the gathering of

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the gall nuts on the oak trees of the parish ; of 1815, the invasion, the cry of relief that rose from all mothers' hearts at the fall of the first Empire ; the dances, the bonfires lighted in all the market places, and the smart Cossack officer who made her skip like a kid, as they danced all night long on the bridge of Beaucaire. Then came her marriage, the death of her husband ; that of her eldest daughter, which a sad presentiment and a sudden shock of terror revealed to her at a distance of many miles away — mournings, births, and the removal of the cherished remains of her dear ones, when the old cemetery was closed. It was like turning over the leaves of one of those ancient family chronicles, with well worn edges, wherein formerly it was the custom to write down the inner life of the family, mixed with the common details of every-day life, and where the accounts of good years of wine and oil stand

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side by side with perfect marvels of self-sacrifice and pious resignation. In this half-rustic *bourgeoise* there was I felt, a beautiful soul, charmingly feminine, delicate, intuitive, allied to the graceful and ignorant malice of a little child. Weary of talking, she would sink back in her large armchair, far from the lamp,

while the growing shadows of the falling night closed her sunken eyelids, slowly crept over her aged face, with its long lines of wrinkles, furrowed as with the plough and the harrow; and silent and motionless, I might have thought her asleep, had it not been for the clink of the beads, that her fingers were telling at the bottom of her pocket. Then I softly rose, and went to end my evening in the large kitchen.

In the ingle-nook of the gigantic chimney,

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where the copper lamp hung, a numerous company was seated in front of a bright fire of olive roots, the fitful flame of which fantastically lit up the pointed caps of the women and the yellow woollen jackets of the men. In the place of honour, on the hearth-stone, squatted the shepherd, with his shaven chin, tanned skin and his *cachimbau* (short pipe) stuck in the corner of his well-cut mouth; he hardly spoke, being accustomed to the contemplative silence of his long months of lonely watching, far away from all human companionship, on the Alps of Dauphiny, gazing up at the stars he knew so well, from *Jen de Milan* down to the *Char des âmes.* Between the puffs of his pipe, he gave out in his sonorous dialect, sentences, half uttered parables, and incomprehensible proverbs, some of which I still remember.

"*The song of Paris, the saddest history in the world. Man in speech and beast by his horns. Monkey's work, little and bad. As the moon wanes, water falls. Red moon, wind changes. White moon, fine day.*" And every evening he brought the proceedings to a close with the following sentence. "*The longer the old woman lived, the more she*

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knew and for that, the less willing was she to die."

By his side, the keeper Mitifio, nicknamed Pistol, with merry twinkling eye, and white, pointed beard, amused the company, with a series of tales and legends, pointed and spiced afresh by his mischievous and thoroughly Provençal wit. Sometimes, in the midst of the laughter caused by one of Pistol's stories, the shepherd would say very gravely, "If a white beard were all that is needful to be accounted wise, then the goats would be the wisest." There was also old Siblet, Dominique, the coachman, and a little hunchback, called *lou Roudèirou* (the prowler), a kind of hobgoblin, the spy of the village, whose sharp, inquisitive glances pierced both night and walls; an ill-tempered fellow, eaten up by religious and political hatreds.

You should have heard him imitate and repeat the stories of old Jean, a red republican of '93, lately dead, and who to the last remained faithful to his opinions. The journey of Jean Coste twenty leagues on foot to go and see his village *curé* and his two *secondaires* (curates) guillotined. "Ah, well, my children, when I saw them stick

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their heads through the *lunette*—and it was not very becoming to them as a collar—by gad, well, I was pleased;—*taben aguéré dé plesi.*" Jean Coste all shivering, warming his old carcase against some wall, hot in the blazing sun, and saying to the lads around him, "Young men, have you read Volney? *Jouven auès legi Voulney?* He mathematically proved that there is no other God but the sun! *Gès dé Diou, doum dé Liou! rèn qué lou souleù!*" And then the way he judged the men of the Revolution: "Marat, good fellow. Saint Just, good fellow. Danton also a good fellow — but towards the end he got spoilt and became moderate in his views—*dins lou mouderantismo!*" Then the description of Jean Coste's death scene, when, raising himself up like a spectre in his bed, he spoke French for the first time in his life, to throw in the face of the priest: "Avaunt, black raven, the carrion is not yet ready for thee." And the little hunchback

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accentuated these last words so horribly that the women screamed out, "*Aïe!* dear life!" and the sleeping dogs started awake, and ran growling towards the door, shaken by the moaning night wind, until some clear and ringing woman's voice struck up, in order to dispel the painful impression, a Christmas carol of Saboly: "*I saw in the air—an angel all green —with a pair of great wings — springing out from his shoulders;*" or else the arrival of the Magi at Bethlehem: "*Behold the Moorish King—with his rolling eyes;—the infant Jesus weeps—the King no longer dares to enter.*" A simple and flute-like air, that I noted down with all the imagery, expression and local tradition gathered up from the ashes of this old hearth.

Often too my fancy carried me off, and I made little excursions around my windmill. Sometimes it was a shooting or fishing expedition in Camargue and the pool of Vacarès, amidst the herds of wild cattle and horses

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ranging freely in this pampas-grown corner. Another day I went and joined my friends the Provençal poets, the *Félibres*. At that time the *Félibrige* had not yet been set up as an university institution. We were still in the early days of enthusiasm, in the fervent and ingenuous stage, devoid of schisms or rivalry. Five or six jolly comrades, with innocent child-like laughter and beards like apostles, met occasionally, either at Maillane, in Frédéric Mistral's little village, from which I was separated by the jagged, rocky line of the Alpilles; or at Arles, in the forum, surrounded by a throng of drovers and shepherds gathered together to be hired by the farmers. Or we went to Aliscamps, and there, lying on the grass amongst the sarcophagi of gray stone, listened to some fine drama of Théodore Aubanel's, while the air vibrated with the click of the grasshopper, and from behind a screen of gray trees, resounded ironically the blows of the hammers in the workshops of the Paris-Lyons-Mediterranean Railway. When the reading was over, we took a turn on the Lice, just to see pass, in her white necker-

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chief and little helmet-shaped cap, the proud and coquettish Arlésienne, for whose sake poor Jan killed himself. At other times our trysting-place was at the Ville des Baux, that powdery mass of crumbling ruins, wild rocks and escutcheoned palaces, which rocked feebly in the wind, perched up like eagles' nests on the heights, from whence could be descried, far beyond the plains, a line of purer, brighter blue, which is the sea. We supped at the inn at Cornille; and strolled about all the evening, singing verses in the midst of the little winding streets, the tumbled down walls, the ruined stairways and columns, all lighted up by a spectral light, which tipped the grass and stones as with a slight sprinkling of snow.

"Poets *anén!*" said Master Cornille. "People who like to see the ruins by moonlight."

The Félibrige also met amongst the reeds and rushes of the island of Barthelasse, opposite the ramparts of Avignon and the Papal Palace, silent witnesses of the intrigues and adventures of the little Vedène. Then, after breakfasting in some little boatman's

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tavern, we went up to see the poet Anselme Mathieu, at Châteauneuf-des-Papes, famous for its vines, which for a long time were the most celebrated in Provence. Oh, the wine of the Popes, the golden, regal, imperial, pontifical wine! We drank it up there on the hill, and sang the verses of Mistral, new fragments out of his *Iles d'or*. "At Arles, in the olden times—bloomed the Queen Ponsirade—a rose bush." And then again the fine sea ditty, "The boat comes from Majorca—with a cargo of oranges." What with the blazing sun, the sloping vineyards, propped up by low dry stone walls, the olive, pomegranate and myrtle trees, one might have fancied oneself in Majorca. Through the open casement flew away the rhymes, humming like bees, and we too, carried away by them, spent whole days flitting across the sunny province of Comtat, through highways and byeways, making a halt in the towns, under the plane trees in the

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Corso, or the Square; and with much loud-voiced gesticulation, we distributed from our lofty waggonette, nostrums to the assembled populace. Our nostrum was Provençal verse; fine verses in the language of these peasants, who understood and greeted with applause the strophes of *Mireille*, of *la Vénus d'Arles* by Aubanel, a legend of Anselme Mathieu or Roumanille; and took up the chorus with us in the song to the Sun: *Great Sun of Provence,—gay comrade of the mistral, — thou who swallowest up the Durance—like a goblet of Crau wine.* And we wound up with an improvised ball, or dance, the lads and lasses in their working attire; and the corks flying round the tables; and if perchance some prayer-muttering old harridan ventured to criticize the freedom of our mirth, the handsome Mistral,

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proud as King David, would say, looking down upon her, "Be quiet, be quiet old mother. Everything is permissible to poets." And he added, confidentially winking to the old woman, who dazzled, respectfully curtsied to him, "*Es nautré qué fasen li saumé.* — It is we who write the psalms."

How delightful it was to return, after one of these lyrical escapades, to the windmill, and lying on the grass of the platform, to think over the book I should sooner or later make out of all this; a book to which I would give the murmur that lingered in my ears, of those songs, that ringing laughter, those fairy-like legends, and also the reflection of that vibrating sun-light, the perfume of those sunburnt hill-sides, and that I would date from my dear ruin with its shattered and useless sails.

The first *Lettres de mon Moulin* appeared, somewhere about 1866, in a Parisian paper where these Provençal chronicles, signed under a double pseudonym borrowed from Balzac "Marie-Gaston," jarred by the peculiarity of their style. Gaston was my

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comrade Paul Arène, then a young man, who had just had a little piece of his, full of wit and vivacity, played at the Odéon; he lived near me on the confines of the woods of Meudon. But although this exquisite writer had not yet put to his credit *Jean des Figues*, nor *Paris ingénu*, nor yet many pages of his delicate and powerful writings, he had already too much real talent, too strong a personality, to be satisfied for long with the mere occupation of a miller's man. I therefore remained alone to fashion my little stories, at the changing caprice of each breeze and each hour, while I led a terribly restless existence. The work was broken and intermittent; then I married, and carried off my wife to Provence, to show her my windmill. Nothing had changed there, neither the landscape nor the welcome. The old mother tenderly pressed us both to her little checked shawl, and a place was made for the *novio* at the boys' table. She sat by my side on the platform of the windmill, where the *tramontana*, beholding in this Parisian an enemy of sunshine and wind, took pleasure in shaking and ruffling her,

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striving to bear her away in a whirlwind like Chénier's young Tarentine.

It was on my return from this journey that, seized again by a love for my Provence, I began in the *Figaro* a new series of *Lettres de mon Moulin, Les Vieux, La Mule du Pape, L'Elixir du Père Gaucher*, &c.; written at Champrosay, in that studio of Eugène Delacroix's which I have already mentioned in the story of *Jack*, and of *Robert Helmont*. The volume was published by Hetzel, in 1869, two thousand copies were with difficulty disposed of, waiting, like my other earlier works, till the success of my novels should create some further demand for them. Nevertheless it is still my favourite book, not from a literary point of view, but because it recalls the happiest hours of my youth, madcap laughter, intoxication without remorse, friendly faces and places that I shall never see again.

Now Montauban is deserted, the "dear Mamma" is dead, the sons dispersed, the Châteauneuf vineyard utterly destroyed. Where are Miracle and Miraclet, Siblet, Mitifio, le Roudéirou? If I went down

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there, I should find no one I knew. They tell me however that the pines are very much grown, and above the glittering undulations of their dark green tops, my windmill turns merrily round in the sun; repaired, recovered, with new sails, like a vessel just afloat; poet set once more to the wind; dreamer restored to life and action.

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MY FIRST PLAY.

Ah, how long ago that was! Far, very far from Paris, I was enjoying a springtide of happiness, under a flood of light, at the further end of Algeria in the valley of Chélif, one fine day in February, 1862. Thirty miles of plain lay before me, bordered on the right and left by a double line of mountains, all transparent and purple like amethysts in the golden mist. Lentisks dwarf palms, stony beds of dried torrents, choked with oleanders; and far apart in the distance a caravansary or an Arab village; on the heights, some saint's tomb gleaming in its whitewash, like a great die capped by a half orange, and hither and thither, under the broad white expanse of sunlight, dark moving objects,

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which are flocks, and which, were it not for the deep uniform blue of the sky, might be mistaken for gliding shadows cast by the passing clouds. All the morning we had been hunting; then the afternoon heat becoming too oppressive, my friend *bachaga*, Boualem had the tent pitched. One of the sides was raised on poles, like an awning; and from that side the whole horizon was visible. In front of us the hobbled horses stood motionless with their heads down, the great deer-hounds slept curled up in the sun; and lying down flat on his stomach in the midst of his little pots and pans, our coffee maker was preparing the moka on a tiny fire of dry twigs, the thin smoke of which ascended straight up into the air; while we lay silently rolling big cigarettes,—Boualem-Ben-Cherifa, his friends Si Sliman, Sid'Omar, the *aga* of the Atafs and myself, stretched out on cushions in the shadow of the white tent, tinted amber by the sunlight outside, while the outline of the symbolical crescent and bloody hand, obligatory ornaments of every Arab dwelling, appeared like transparencies on the canvas.

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It was a delicious afternoon, and one which should have lasted for ever! One of those golden hours, which stand out, after even four and twenty years, radiant as on the first day, from the gray background of life. And see how illogical and perverse is our unfortunate human nature. To this day I cannot think of that siesta in the tent, without regret and longing: but on that afternoon I must own, in that country, I thirsted for Paris.

Yes, I regretted Paris, which I had been obliged to leave abruptly on account of my health, seriously impaired by my five years literary novitiate. I regretted Paris for all the beloved reasons I left there behind me: for its fogs and its gas, for its newspapers and new books, for the evening discussions at the café, or under the portico of the theatre, for that glorious fever of art, and that perpetual enthusiasm, of which at that time I only saw the sincere side; I regretted it above all, on account of my play, my first play!—of which the acceptance at the Odéon had been announced to me on the very day of departure. Certainly, the land-

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scape before me was beautiful, and the setting of it singularly poetic; but I would then willingly have exchanged Algeria and the Atlas, Boualem and his friends, the blue of the sky, the gleaming white of the Marabouts' tombs, and the exquisite pink of the oleanders, for the gray colonnade of the Odéon, the little lobby of the artists' entrance, and the office of Constant the *concierge*, a man of taste, —all hung with autographs of actors and portraits of actresses in costume.

Instead of all this, there I was in Algeria, leading the life of a great lord of medieval times, when I might have been moving triumphantly, with the hypocritically modest mien of the new author whose piece is about to be played, through those repulsive corridors, which had once seen me so trembling and timid. I was accustoming myself to the society of Arab chiefs, undeniably picturesque, but wanting in conversation; while the prompter, the scene-shifters, the manager, the director

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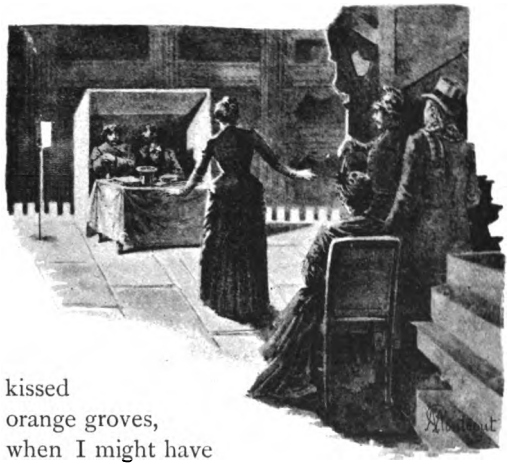
and all the innumerable tribe of over-painted and dyed actresses and blue-chinned actors were busy over my piece! I breathed the fresh and penetrating scent of the breeze-



kissed
orange groves,
when I might have
delighted my nostrils with the close and fusty odour peculiar to theatre walls! And then the ceremony of reading to the actors, the bottle and tumbler of water, and the manuscript shining white under the lamp! The rehearsals too! in the

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green room at first, round the great chimney piece, then on the stage: the stage, with its mysterious, unfathomable depths, all crowded with frame-work and side scenes, facing the empty house, echoing as a cavern, and freezing to behold, with the great chandelier covered up, and the boxes, dress circle and stalls all shrouded in gray linen. Then would come the first representation; the front of the theatre, casting on the square before it, the cheerful brightness of its lines of gas, the vehicles arriving, the crowd at the box office, the anxious wait at the café opposite, alone with some faithful friend, and then the throb of emotion, striking the heart like a blow, at the moment when shadows in black coats, moving with animation, appearing against the lighted windows of the lobby, announced that the curtain has fallen, and that, amidst applause or hooting, the name of the author has been proclaimed. "Come," says the friend, "courage; we must go and see how it has all gone off; thank the actors, and shake hands with the friends who are impatiently waiting in the little room at the café Tabourey." This

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was the dream that I dreamt wide awake beneath the tent, in the drowsy heat of a fine month in the African winter; whilst far away, amongst the oblique rays of the sunset, a well—white but an hour ago—became rose tinted; and for all noise, on the silence of the vast plain, rose the tinkle of a sheep bell and the melancholy call of the shepherds.

There was absolutely nothing to disturb my reverie. My hosts knew, amongst the four of them, some twenty words of French; I for my part, scarcely ten words of Arabic. The companion who had brought me there and who usually served as my interpreter (a Spanish corn merchant, whose acquaintance I had made at Milianah) was not with me, having persevered in the chase: so that we smoked our great cigarettes in silence, while sipping the black Moorish coffee out of microscopic cups, inserted in egg-cups of silver filigree.

Suddenly, there was a great commotion, the dogs barked, the servants ran hither and thither, a great long devil of a spahi in his red burnous stopped his horse short in front of the tent and said,—"Sidi Daoudi?"

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It was a telegram from Paris, which had followed my track from camp to camp since I left Milianah. It contained merely these words :—" Piece played yesterday, great success, Rousseil and Tisserant splendid !

I read and re-read this delightful telegram, twenty times, a hundred times over, as if it were a love letter. Only think ! my first piece. Seeing my hands trembling with emotion, and the happiness shining in my eyes, the " agas " smiled at me

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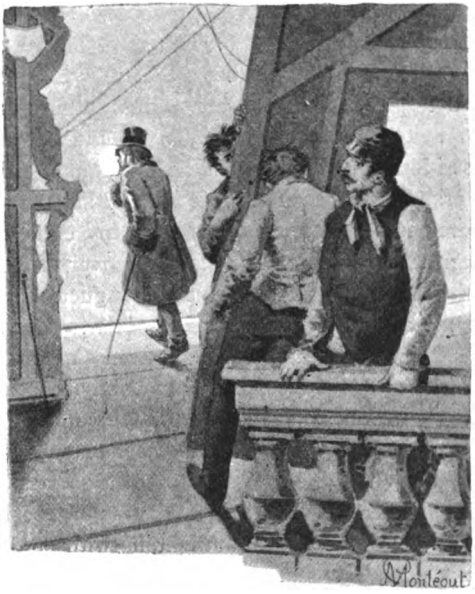
and spoke among themselves in Arabic. The cleverest of them even called up all his learn-



ing to his aid, in order to say to me, "France—news—family?" Ah no, it was no news of my family which made my heart beat

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so rapturously; and unable to accustom myself to the notion of having no one to whom I could communicate my delight, I set to work to explain with my four words of Arabic and the twenty words of French I believed them to understand, what a theatre was, and the importance of a first representation in Paris, to the aga of the Atafs, to Sid'Omar, to Si-Sliman, and Boualem Ben-Cherifa. Hard work, as you may fancy! I hunted for comparisons, I expressed myself in endless pantomime, I flourished the blue cover of the telegram saying: Karagueuz! Karagueuz! as if my affecting little piece, intended to touch the heart and draw forth tears from the eyes of innocence, could possibly have any affinity with the monstrous and devilish buffoonery in which the Turks delight; and as if one could without blasphemy compare the classic Odéon with the clandestine haunts of every Moorish town, in which at night, notwithstanding the exertions of the police, the good Mussulmans assemble to enjoy the spectacle of the wanton adventures of their favourite hero!

These are the mirages of Africa. In Paris a disappointment awaited me. For I returned to

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Paris at once in frantic haste, and much sooner than prudence and the doctors would sanction. But what mattered to me the fog and the snow that I sought, what did I care for the balmy sky I should leave behind me? To see my piece! Nothing else in the world signified. I am on board, I am on shore, I fly through Marseilles, and behold me in the train, trembling with eager excitement. I arrived in Paris at about six o'clock in the evening, when it was dark. I could not wait for dinner, but cried: "To the Odéon, Cabby!" Ah, youth! youth!

They were about to draw up the curtain when I seated myself in my stall. The house presented a strange appearance; it was Shrove Tuesday; there would be dancing all night at Bullier, and a large number of students and their sweethearts had come to pass a couple of hours at the play in their masquerade costumes. There were jesters, clowns, pierrots, pierrettes, follies. "Difficult, very difficult," I thought to myself, "to bring tears to the eyes of such a motley crowd!" They did cry however, and cried so much that the spangles on the dresses, which

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caught the light, seemed so many bright tear-drops. On my right was a little Folly whose cap and bells were shaken every moment by her sobs, and on my left a Pierrette, a fat, roundabout creature with a tender heart, absurd to see in her emotion, with two great streams running from her eyes and falling down the double furrow coursed in the powder on her cheeks. Decidedly, the telegram had not lied, my little piece really was a great success. During this time however I, the author, would gladly have been a hundred feet under ground. The play that these good people were applauding, I now considered odiously bad. What a failure! Was that my dream? that fat man, who, in order to appear paternal and virtuous, had made himself up to resemble Béranger! Naturally, I was most unjust: Tisserant and Rousseil, two artists of great ability, acted as well as an actor can act, and to their talent was due much of my success. But the blow was terrible, the difference too monstrous between that which I fancied I had written, and what I now saw before me; showing all its flaws, blemishes and defects in the pitiless glare of

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the footlights; and cruelly I suffered on seeing my cherished ideal reduced to a mere stuffed lay figure. Notwithstanding the emotion, notwithstanding the applause, I felt an indescribable sensation of shame and disgust. The blood rushed hotly to my head and flushed my cheeks. It seemed to me as if all this masquerading public were scoffing at me and knew me. Wretched, ill, losing my head, I nervously repeated the actor's gestures. I longed to make them move more quickly, speak more quickly, skim over phrases and stage, so that the torture might be the sooner ended. What a relief it was when the curtain fell, and I could make my escape, skirting the walls, with turned up coat-collar, shamefaced and stealthy as a thief.

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HENRI ROCHEFORT.

SOMEWHERE about 1859, I made the acquaintance of an excellent fellow, who was one of the clerks in the *bureaux* of the Hôtel de Ville. His name was Henri Rochefort, but this name at that time conveyed no particular meaning. Rochefort lived in a quiet and unpretending manner with his parents in the old rue des Deux-Boules, within reach of his work, in the swarming Quartier Saint-Denis, invaded by business and fancy goods, with its houses full of shops, covered from top to

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bottom with sign-boards, everywhere samples displayed, placards hung at the sides of the doors: such as, *Feathers and flowers, Imitation Jewellery, Beads and Spangles, Mock Pearls;* a different trade on every floor; a perpetual noise of work descending from the windows to the street below; vans being loaded, parcels tied up, clerks running about pen behind ear; a work-girl in her smock, gilt-clips sticking in her hair; and here and there some fine old mansion turned into a wholesale shop, its coat-of-arms and sculptures carrying one's thoughts back a couple of centuries, causing one to dream of upstart valets, financiers made of money, of Count Horn, of the Regent, of the Mississippi, of Law and his great scheme; of the time, in short, when in these now commercial and *bourgeois* streets fluctuated the most wildly impossible fortunes; a flood of feverish excitement and of wealth rolling with the majestic impassibility of a tide from out of that narrow, stinking passage hard by, still called rue Quincampoix! My friend Rochefort was a little like the street he lived in, and held his past in small account. Every

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one knew he was of noble birth, son of a Count; he appeared to ignore that, and simply called himself Rochefort; and this American simplicity did not fail to impress me, freshly imported from our vain and legitimist South.

M. de Rochefort, the father, belonged to the generation of men who were young in 1830, and whose career was interrupted and future spoilt by the Revolution of July. It was a particularly amiable and witty generation, preserving a delicate perfume of *ancien régime* in the atmosphere of Louis Philippe's reign; sulking at the new royalty, without however sulking at France; attached to the elder branch, but too well aware that any restoration must be for a long time impossible to permit the slightest mark of the gloomy temper of the fanatic or sectarian to brand their sceptical and disinterested loyalty. While some of them amused themselves by bombarding the Tuileries with their sparkling wit, or protested against the dulness of the *bourgeois* manners by joining the uproarious crowd of masqueraders and jingling jesters, in the legendary "descente de la Courtille"; others

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less scatterbrained or poorer, tried to procure by their own labour what they could no longer hope for from the good graces of royalty. Thus did M. de Lauzanne, whom we saw not long ago pass by still brisk and smiling, still erect in spite of his great age, still a thorough gentleman, notwithstanding his work as a vaudevilliste, and the nickname of Father Lauzanne which his colleagues with affectionate familiarity bestowed on him; thus did also M. de Rochefort, who in his day had been the intimate friend of the ex-bodyguard "Choca," and very prominent in his time among the noisy young royalist party. Having been much addicted to haunting the green room, Rochefort, the father, like Lauzanne, when bad times came, remembered the way to the theatre, and returned thither, this time to make a livelihood. Within every amateur is concealed an author; and from applauding plays, to trying to write them, the transition is easy; thus M. de Rochefort-Luçay wrote plays and became a vaudevilliste.

These details are not without meaning, for they serve to give us an idea of the surroundings in which Rochefort's childhood was

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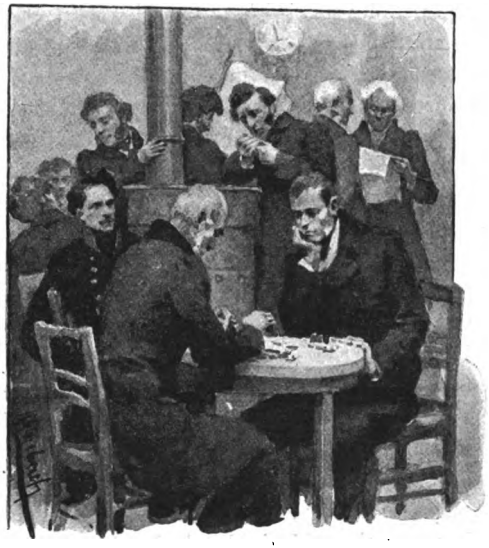
passed. It was a curious childhood, characteristic and very Parisian, spent entirely between the Lycée and the little world of the theatre ;



the cafés to which his father took him on Sundays, where authors and actors meet, are more patriarchal than is generally supposed ; and instead of the mad revels dreamt of by

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the provincial mind, one hears the dry click of the dice thrown on the backgammon boards, or of the dominoes as they are moved to and fro. Rochefort was therefore the collegian, son of an artist or man of letters, that we have all known, initiated from childhood into the secrets of the green room, addressing the most celebrated actors with familiarity, knowing all about the newest plays, secretly giving orders for the play to the under master, and thus able to compose with impunity in the recesses of his desk, in company with a pipe and a tame lizard, a whole heap of masterpieces, dramatic or otherwise, which he would carry on the next holiday, his cap jauntily stuck aside, and his heart beating fiercely enough to burst the buttons off his tunic,—to the letter-boxes—never open—of the newspaper offices, or to the sneering stage doorkeepers of the theatres. The destiny of such collegians can be traced beforehand: at twenty they obtain a clerkship of some sort, ministerial or civil, and continue to manufacture subterranean literature at the bottom of a desk, concealing it from their chiefs as they had done from their schoolmasters.

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Rochefort did not escape the usual fate. After trying the highest flights of literature, and after having fruitlessly sent I know not how many odes and sonnets to all the poetic assemblies of France, he used, when I knew him, the pens and paper of the Paris Municipality in writing short *résumés* of plays for the *Charivari*, which was just then reforming its staff and trying to infuse therein a little fresh blood.

Although I could not guess the future in store for Rochefort, his physiognomy interested me from the very first. It was evidently not that of a man who would long put up with this clerk-like existence, fettered by the punctuality of the office hours, as exasperating as the tic-tac of a Black Forest cuckoo clock. You know the strange head, just such as it has always remained, a head of hair standing erect and bristly above a forehead almost too large, at one and the same time an abode for neuralgia and a reservoir of enthusiasm; deep and hollow eyes gleaming under the shadow of the brow, the nose, straight and sharp, the mouth curved bitterly, the whole face lengthened by a pointed beard, which

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inevitably made one think of a sceptical Don Quixote, or a gentle Mephistopheles. Very thin, he wore a wretched black coat, which was much too tight, and it was his custom to keep his hands buried in his trouser pockets—a deplorable habit, which made him seem even thinner than he really was, accentuating terribly the angularity of his elbows and the narrowness of his shoulders. He was generous and a good friend, capable of great self sacrifice, and under the appearance of coldness, was nervous and easily irritated. One day, in consequence of an article, on what subject I no longer remember, he had a duel with the editor of the *Gaulois* newspaper. The *Gaulois* of that day (for the title of a newspaper in France has more incarnations than Buddha, and passes through more hands than the betrothed of the King of Garbe), the *Gaulois* of that day, was one of those ephemeral cabbage leaves such as spring up between the paving stones around the cafés of the theatres and the literary taverns. The editor, a short, jolly, witty, red and round little man, was, as far as I can recollect, called Delvaille

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and signed himself Delbrecht, no doubt thinking that a prettier name. Delvaille or Delbrecht, whichever you please, had provoked Rochefort. Rochefort would have preferred to fight with pistols; not that he was a very alarmingly good shot, but he had sometimes won a few macaroons at a fair: while, as to a sword, neither from far nor from near, could he ever remember having seen such a thing. Delvaille, having been challenged, had choice of weapons, and chose swords. "Very well then, said Rochefort, I will fight with swords." A rehearsal of the duel was held in Paul Véron's room. Rochefort was willing to run the risk of being killed, but not that of appearing ridiculous. Véron therefore had summoned a great sergeant-major of Zouaves (since then cut to pieces at Solferino) very skilful at the salutes, attitudes, and manners most in fashion in the barrack fencing school. "After you—Not at all—To please you—Proceed, Sir." After ten minutes fencing, Rochefort might as far as grace went, have shown the most moustached *la Ramée* how to set to work. The two champions met the next day, in those

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delightful woods of Chaville between Paris and Versailles, which we all know so well, often spending Sunday there in less warlike pastimes. A cold fine rain was falling that day, making bubbles on the pond, and veiling in a faint mist the green circle of hills, the slope of a ploughed field, and the fallen sides of a red sand pit. The combatants took off their shirts, notwithstanding the rain, and, but for the gravity of the situation, one would have been tempted to laugh at seeing, face to face, this little fat and white-haired fellow, in a flannel vest piped with blue at the wrists, putting himself into position as correctly as on the platform ; and Rochefort, lanky, spare, yellow, grim as a death's head, and so cased in bony ribs that one really doubted whether there was space upon his body for the prick of a sword. Unfortunately, he had forgotten in the night all the fine lessons of the sergeant-major, held his sword like a taper and made the most reckless thrusts leaving himself exposed. At the first pass he received a thrust which grazed his side. The sword had scratched him but very slightly. It was his first duel.

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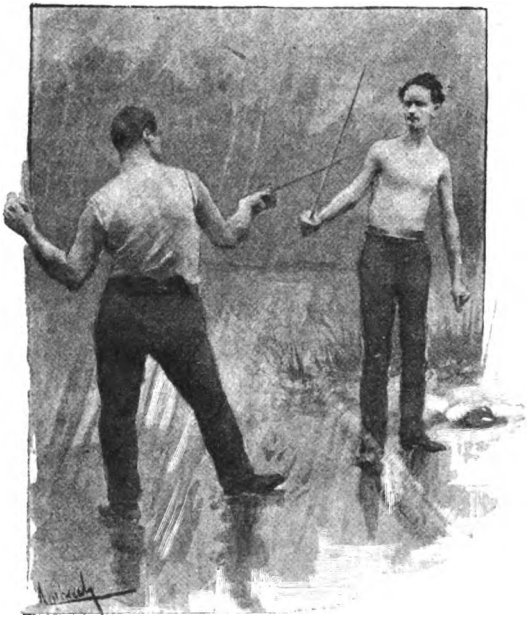
I shall surprise no one by saying that even then Rochefort was witty; but it was a



kind of concentrated wit, of subtle essence consisting, above all, of cutting words long meditated, in the association of ideas utterly

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incongruous and unforeseen ; in the wildest absurdities, in chilling, and ferocious jokes, which he muttered between his teeth with the voice of Cham, and the silent laugh of Leather-stocking. But this wit remained useless and congealed. His witticisms were amusing enough when uttered among intimate friends and comrades, but to write and print such things, to plunge into literature with any such furious bounds and capers, appeared impossible. Rochefort did not know his own value, and as is generally the case, it was a chance, an accident, which revealed to him his talent. He had for friend and inseparable companion, a singular figure, whose mere name will raise a smile amongst those of my own generation who can recall an acquaintance with him. He was called Léon Rossignol. A true type of old man's child, one might almost say he was born old. Slim and blanched like a lettuce grown in a cellar, at eighteen he was a confirmed snuff-taker, coughed and expectorated, and leant with an air of dignity on a stick worthy of a grandpapa. A medley of irreconcilable elements ; or rather having

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in him some unsettled spirit, this bold fellow, strange to say, was fond of a quarrel and afraid of a blow. Cowardly and insolent as Panurge, he was capable of provoking without rhyme or reason the first carabineer he met in the street, and if the soldier took the joke amiss—of falling on his knees to beg pardon, with such exaggerated humility, that the offended party scarcely knew whether to laugh or be angry. In short, he was a grown-up child, weak and sickly; beloved by Rochefort on account of his ready command of vulgar oratory, wittily attuned to the taste of the populace, and whom he saved more than once from the consequences he might have brought upon himself through some practical joke carried too far. Rossignol, like Rochefort, was employed at the Hôtel de Ville. He was perched aloft, on the top story, under the roof, in an office, far away at the end of a labyrinth of narrow staircases and passages, and there, in charge of stores, he gravely distributed as required, paper, pens, pencils, pen-knives, letter-weights, squares of india-rubber, bottles of pounce powder, blue ink, red ink, gold dust, illustrated

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almanacs, and I know not what else; all the useless paraphernalia with which the idle penmen of a great office love to surround themselves, and which one may call the flora of office life. Rossignol too had naturally literary ambition. To see his name in some publication or another was his most ardent desire, and we used to amuse ourselves, Pierre Véron, Rochefort and I, by cooking up for him scraps of articles, or improvising little quatrains, which he at once carried, full of pride, to the *Tintamarre*. This irresponsibility had a curious effect. Rochefort, who, when he wrote under his own name was hampered by servile imitations and conventionalism, showed originality and individuality the moment he wrote under the signature of Rossignol. Then he was free, then he did not feel the irritated eye of the Institute following on his paper the unacademic contortions of his thought and style. And it was delightful to see this bold spirit indulging in mirth; cool, incisive, full of astonishing audacity and familiarity, with a feeling peculiar to himself for everything pertaining to Parisian life, and for taking it as

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text for all manner of jokes, put together with patience and without mercy; in the midst of which the phrase maintained the solemnity of a clown between two grins, content with

just one wink, when once the paragraph was ended.

"But this is charming, new, original, quite yourself; why don't you write like this on your own account?" "You are right perhaps. I must try." Rochefort's style was dis-

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covered, the Empire had now to look to itself.

It has been said that it was the spirit of Arnal on paper, and that Rochefort had only put in paragraphs the dialogues of Duvert and Lauzanne. We do not deny the influence. It is evident that the point of view and the mode of expressing in a set formula a given proceeding, of turning the dialogue and giving a fanciful twist to the thought, which, during the endless games of dominoes on the Boulevard du Temple, had made an impression on his school-boy brain, were not without their use to him afterwards. But these are unconscious imitations, from which no one can escape. It is not contrary to the laws of literature to pick up a rusty weapon; the important part is to know how to sharpen the blade, and to re-model the hilt to the measure of one's hand.

Rochefort made his *début* in the *Nain Jaune*, edited by Aurélien Scholl. Who does not know Scholl? However little you may have frequented the Boulevards of Paris, or visited their neighbourhood during the last thirty years, you must have remarked in front of Tortoni's, under the lime trees of Baden,

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or the palms of Monte Carlo, these pre-eminently Parisian and Boulevardier features. By the gaiety of the accent, the clear sharpness of the tone, the brilliant and trenchant sparkle of the style, Scholl—in the midst of a Paris overwhelmed by Parliamentary slang and the foolish babble of reporters—remains one of the last, we might almost say *the* last, *petit journaliste.* The *petit journaliste* in the sense given to the words, means a journalist who thinks himself bound to be at the same time a journalist and a good writer; the great journalist considers himself free from this obligation. Like many others, in these troubled latter days, Scholl, little by little, seeing no harm in it, has been drawn into the political arena. He is in the full heat of the battle now, and it is amusing to see this grandson of Rivarol become republican, pointing against the enemies of the Republic, the golden arrows dipped in a little poison, borrowed from the reactionary arsenal of the *Actes des Apôtres.* But at the date of the *Nain Jaune,* politics languished, and neither did Scholl any more than Rochefort have any thought or expectation of a

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Republic. He contented himself with being one of the most amiable sceptics and the wittiest scoffers in Paris. Passionately fond of display, in his character of Bordelais, he maintained—what in those good old times of *Sainte Bohême* had a faint suspicion of paradox about it—he maintained that a literary man ought to pay his bootmaker, and that one could be witty and yet own fresh gloves and a clean shirt. Faithful to his principles, he made use of all the elegances of the moment, even to the eye glass wedged in the corner of his eye, to which he still adheres; he breakfasted at Bignon's, and afforded the Parisians the entirely novel sight of a simple chronicler partaking daily of his boiled egg and his cutlet, in company with the Duc de Grammont-Caderousse, who was at that time the reigning monarch of the gilded youth. The *Nain Jaune* was the only serious rival Villemessant ever encountered. Greatly helped forward by his fashionable acquaintances, Scholl, in a few months had succeeded in making his journal the organ of high life, and of the clubs, the umpire of Parisian elegance; but, at the end of a year, he

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became disgusted, and thought himself worthy of better things; he was too much of a writer, too much of a journalist, to remain long as a mere editor.

Rochefort's success in the *Nain Jaune* was rapid, and in the *Figaro*, which hastened to secure his pen, he was still more brilliant. The Parisians, always critical fault-finders, and long unaccustomed to independence took a fancy to these pamphlets, which set to work to mock aloud, in a tone of jeering raillery, all sorts of solemn and official things which, till now, the boldest had hardly dared to jest at in a whisper. Rochefort was fairly launched, he had duels, more successful than that on the borders of the pond at Chaville; he gambled, lived generously, filled Paris with the noise of his fame, and remained, in spite of all, notwithstanding the intoxication of the successes of an evening or an hour, the same Rochefort I had known at the Hôtel de Ville, always modest and kindly, always ready to do a service to a friend; always uneasy about the forthcoming article, always fearing he had lost the vein, exhausted himself, and could continue no longer.

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Villemessant, who loved to be despotic with his contributors, had for this one an admiration coupled with fear. The mocking and impassive face, the headstrong and fantastic temperament astounded him. The fact is, Rochefort was full of strange obstinacies and singular caprices. I have related elsewhere the effect of his article on M. de Saint Rémy's play, and with what insolent familiarity he put down the pretensions of this unlucky ducal, presidential volume, which had been decked with every term of flattery by each Dangeau and Jules Lecomte of journalism. Paris chuckled at the audacity, Morny felt the hit and called out. With a simplicity worthy of a wounded author, astonishing however on the part of a man of wit, he sent his dramatic works to Jouvin, concluding that Jouvin would have better taste than Rochefort, and that he would write in the *Figaro*, an article which should make amends.

Jouvin accepted the volume, but wrote no article, and the poor Duke had to swallow as best he could, the bitter prose of Rochefort. What happened then appeared incredible and unlikely at first sight, yet it was after all

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true to human nature. Morny, courted, flattered and all-powerful, conceived a sort of affection, mingled with fear and spite, for the man who had not feared to hold him up to ridicule.

He would have liked to see and know him, to have a quiet explanation with him in a corner, as between two friends. His little court did their best to prove that Rochefort possessed neither wit nor style, and that his judgment was absolutely without weight.

His flatterers (a Vice-Emperor always has plenty of them) visited the quays, and collected little *vaudevilles*, peccadilloes of Rochefort's youth, analysed them, picked them to pieces, and upheld by a thousand conclusive arguments that those of M. de Saint Remy were better. Imaginary crimes were attributed to Rochefort. A fanatical Prudhomme arrived one day at a hand gallop, scarlet with indignation, his eyes starting out of his head. "You know, Rochefort, the famous Rochefort, who gives himself such immaculate airs? Well, do you know what we have found out about him? He was granted a scholarship under the Empire!" What a base and vile

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heart the man must have had, who, having been Imperial scholar at eight years of age, at thirty declared the plays written by *M. le Duc* to be contemptible! A little more and they would have held Rochefort accountable for the political opinions of his nurse! Vain efforts; useless revelations. Morny, like a neglected lover, only became more obstinately determined to make Rochefort his friend.

The caprice became a mania, which possessed him all the more that Rochefort, made aware of it, practised a sort of comic coquetry in persistently refusing to know the Duke. How well I remember, at the first representation of the *Belle Hélène*, Morny stopping Villemessant in the lobby, saying: "This time, you must introduce Rochefort to me!" "Monsieur le Duc! Certainly, Monsieur le Duc! It was but a moment since that we were talking about—" And Villemessant ran off after Rochefort, but Rochefort had vanished. Then the idea was suggested that some arrangement, some kind of trap should be laid, by which the Duke and Rochefort should accidentally be brought together face to face. The latter was known to be a great collector

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of old curios (for had he not published the *Petits Mystères de l'Hôtel des Ventes?*), and was passionately fond of pictures. The Duke had a good many fine paintings. Rochefort would be induced to come and see the gallery, the Duke would be there, as if by chance, and the introduction would thus take place. A day was fixed, a friend undertook to bring Rochefort; the Duke waited in his picture gallery; he waited one hour, two hours, alone with his Rembrandts and his Hobbemas, and again this time the wished-for monster never came.

While the Duke lived (no doubt by a mere coincidence, for I do not suppose that this distant and unrequited friendship was ever carried to the extent of protecting the ungrateful pamphleteer from the decrees of justice), nevertheless, while the Duke lived, Rochefort was comparatively little molested. But once Morny had disappeared from the scene, the persecutions began. Rochefort, exasperated, redoubled in insolence and audacity. Fines fell as thickly as hailstones, and imprisonment followed up the fines. The censor began to notice his writings.

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The censor's conventional palate found that all Rochefort's writings had a strong political flavour. The *Figaro's* very existence was threatened, and Rochefort compelled to withdraw from the paper. He thereupon founded the *Lanterne*, unmasked his batteries, and boldly ran up his pirate flag. It was again Villemessant, Villemessant the conservative, Villemessant of the magisterial fasces, who chartered this fire-ship. The censor and Villemessant on this occasion rendered a strange kind of service to conservatism and to the Empire. The history of the *Lanterne*, and its wonderful success, is well known, the little flame-coloured paper seen in every hand, in the streets, the cabs, the railway carriages, all bright with the red sparks; the Government losing its head, the scandal, the trial, and—inevitable, easily foreseen result—Rochefort named deputy for Paris.

There again, Rochefort remained the same as ever; he carried with him to the benches of the Chamber, even to the tribune, the insulting familiarity of his pamphlets, and to the very last refused to treat the Empire as a

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serious adversary. Do you remember the scandal? A government orator, speaking in a high and mighty tone, and with all the

contempt that a stiff and pompous parliamentary man may feel towards a mere newspaper scribbler, had coupled his name with

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the word ridiculous! Pale, with his teeth clenched, Rochefort rose from his seat, and smiting the sovereign's cheek, over the shoulder of his minister said: "I may sometimes have been ridiculous, but I have never been seen in the tawdry masquerading get-up of a mountebank dentist, with an eagle on my shoulder and a piece of fat bacon in my hat!" That day M. Schneider was presiding. I can remember the consternation expressed on his great good-natured face. And picturing to myself in his place, the Duc de Morny's refined and haughty face, with its cool and ironical expression, I said to myself, "What a pity he is not sitting up there, he would at last have realized his wish, and made the acquaintance of Rochefort."

Since then, I have only twice caught sight of Rochefort: the first time at the funeral of Victor Noir, fainting and borne past in a cab, worn out by the desperate struggle of two hours, that he had maintained by the side of Delescluze against a bewildered mob of two

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hundred thousand unarmed men, who with women and children insisted on taking back the body to Paris, and so march on to certain butchery—as Rochefort knew that cannons were there, ready to fire on them. Then, again another time during the war, in the scurry and bustle of the battle of Buzenval, with the tramping of the troops, the dull sound of the cannons in the forts, the rumbling of the ambulance carts, amid the fever and the smoke ; bishops showing off on horseback, fancifully dressed up like masqueraders; brave citizens going off to be killed, fully believing in Trochu's plan ; in the midst of the heroic, in the midst of the grotesque, in the midst of this never-to-be-forgotten drama—full as those of Shakespeare of both the sublime and the ridiculous—called the Siege of Paris. It was on the road to Mont Valérien, cold and muddy, the bare trees shivered sadly against the monotonous gray of the misty sky. My friend passed by in a carriage, pale and livid as ever, behind the window; still as in the far-away days at the Hôtel de Ville, buttoned up in a tight black coat. I cried to him

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through the storm, "Good morning, Rochefort."

Since then I have never seen him again.[1]

[1] This description of Rochefort was published in the *Nouveau Temps* of St. Petersburg, in 1879.

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HENRY MONNIER.

ONCE more I see myself in the humble garret of my youthful days, in the depth of winter, no fire in the grate, and the window panes clouded by the thick hoar frost. Seated in front of a little white wooden table, my legs wrapped in a travelling rug, I was busily engaged in penning verses. Some one raps at the door,—"Come in!" and in the open doorway a strange apparition comes into sight. Imagine a vast and rotund waistcoat, a shirt collar, a homely, ruddy, close-shaven countenance, with a pair of spectacles astride on a Roman nose. The individual bows ceremoniously, and says,

"I am Henry Monnier."

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Henry Monnier; at that time a celebrity! Actor, writer, artist in one, he was pointed out as he passed through the streets, and M. de Balzac, the great observer, held him in high esteem for his powers of observation. It was a singular style of observation, it must be added, and not at all that of ordinary mortals. Many a writer, indeed, has acquired wealth and renown by rallying the foibles and infirmities of others. Monnier however had not gone far in search of a model: he placed himself in front of his looking-glass, listened to his own thoughts and words, and finding the type thus before him a profoundly ridiculous one, he conceived that pitiless incarnation, that cruel satire on the French *bourgeois*, which is known under the name of *Joseph Prudhomme*. For Monnier is Joseph Prudhomme, and Joseph Prudhomme is Monnier. From the white gaiters to the cravat of many folds and endless windings, they have all in common. Both have the same pompous and turkey-cock style of frill, the same air of grotesque solemnity, the same domineering round-eyed stare through the gold-rimmed spectacles, the same impossible

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apophthegms, delivered in the voice of a vulture with a cold in the head. "If I could only get out of my own skin for an hour or two," says Fantasio to his friend Spark, "if I could only become that man passing by!" Monnier, who had but little affinity with Fantasio, never had any wish to become that passer-by; possessing in the highest degree the singular quality of duality, he sometimes quitted the husk that enveloped him, in order to turn it into ridicule; and to laugh at his own appearance; but he soon wrapped himself again in his cherished personality, and the relentless scoffer, the cruel mocker, the scourge of *bourgeois* foolishness, became again in private life the most ingenuously stupid of the class he ridiculed.

Among other pre-occupations, worthy indeed of Joseph Prudhomme, Henry Monnier was possessed with one idea, which he held in common with every provincial magistrate who is given to improvising rhymes, and with all the superannuated colonels who employ their enforced leisure in translating Horace. He longed to soar aloft on Pegasus, to wear the buskin and sandals of Thalia, to stoop

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and gather in the hollow of his hand—even at the risk of snapping his mental braces—some of the pure water of Hippocrene; he dreamt of verdant laurels, of academic prizes, and last, but not least, of seeing a play of his own acted at the Théâtre Français. Already—does any one remember it now?—a play of his, in three acts and in verse, as the play-bills say, had been represented at the Odéon; *Peintres et Bourgeois* was its title: and it was his joint production with a young commercial traveller, I think, who was somewhat of an expert in the art of turning a couplet. The Odéon was all very well; but the Théâtre Français! the home of Molière! And for twenty years, Henry Monnier prowled round the abode of fame, haunting the Café de la Régence, and the Café Minerve; wherever the *sociétaires* of the theatre met together

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there Monnier was to be seen, always dignified and trim, his tidy and close-shaven face, like that of the "noble father" of a play, and with the conscious self-satisfied look of a pedantic exponent of comedy.

The worthy fellow had read my verses, and counted on my help to realize his ambitious dreams. It was in order to propose our working together that he had clambered panting up the innumerable and steep stairs which led to my attic in the Rue de Tournon. You will easily understand how flattered I was, and with what alacrity I accepted his offer!

The very next day I went to his house. He occupied, in a respectable-looking old house in the Rue Ventadour, a small apartment, which bore the very characteristic stamp of an economical, tidy, fidgety spirit,

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at once actor and old bachelor. Everything —furniture and floors—was polished and shining. In front of each chair was a little round bit of carpet, edged with red cloth, neatly pinked out. There were four spittoons; one in each corner. On the mantelpiece were two saucers, each containing a few pinches of dry snuff. Monnier occasionally dipped into them, but never offered any.

The first impression this house conveyed to my mind was that of miserliness. Later on I learnt that this parsimonious appearance hid in reality a very hard and difficult life. Monnier was entirely without fortune: from time to time the representation of a play, a short article, the sale of a few sketches, came to supplement, and that in a very partial manner, his small resources. Little by little he had slipped into the habit of dining out every day. He was a favourite guest, and paid his welcome by relating, or rather acting —for his parodies and jokes were never spontaneous—highly seasoned stories after dinner. They were either some thoroughly scandalous dialogue between two persons whose voice he mimicked, or else he repre-

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sented his favourite hero, Monsieur Prudhomme, carrying his great stomach and his imperturbable solemnity through the most doubtful and ticklish adventures. All this was delivered without a smile; for the *bourgeois* lurking within Henry Monnier secretly rebelled at playing the part of buffoon. He was full too of despotic and unreasonable requirements; insisting, for instance, on a quarter of an hour's nap after dinner, no matter how high the society in which he happened to be; and was seized with fits of jealousy, sullenness, and rage, like an old parrot robbed of the bone he is picking, if by chance any other than himself led the conversation at table, and threatened to put him in the shade. At one time his friends were anxious to obtain for him a government pension; it would have seemed wealth to the poor fellow, but in this instance his after-dinner jokes had an unfortunate effect. Malassis had published a collection of his stories in Belgium; a copy was sent over to Paris, the ministerial propriety was declared to be outraged, and the promised pension vanished into thin air. This volume must

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not be mistaken for the *Bas fonds de Paris*, which by comparison might have been written for young girls; although the publication of even this last was only permitted on sufferance, and restricted to a very limited number of copies, sufficiently expensive to prevent the volume from exerting a dangerous influence beyond the excommunicated frontiers of the world of bibliophiles.

Such was the double nature of this man—*homo duplex*—who did me the honour of wishing to make me partner in his literary work. Full as I was at twenty of whimsical fancy, I might have been able to agree with the buffoon, but unfortunately it was the *bourgeois* Prudhomme, and he alone, who wished to collaborate with me. After a few interviews I ceased my visits to him. No doubt Henry Monnier hardly regretted me; and of my first dream of fame nothing remains but the memory of this ridiculous old man in his neat and shabby home, taking little whiffs out of little pipes, and seated in the leather arm-chair, wherein he was found dead one morning some fifteen years ago.

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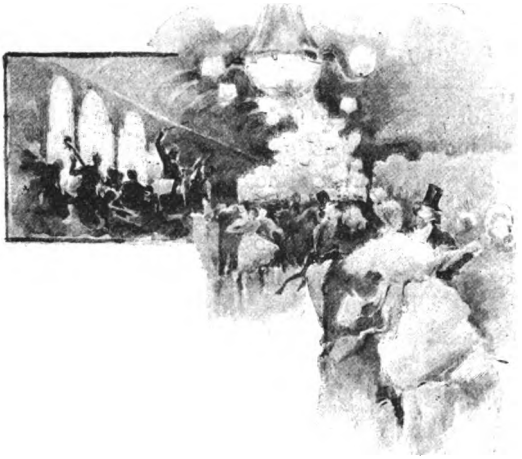

THE END OF A MERRY-ANDREW,

AND OF MURGER'S BOHEMIA.

WHEN I was about eighteen, I made the acquaintance of a somewhat singular individual, who now seems to me, after a certain lapse of time, to be the very personification of a world to itself, with special language and peculiar manners, a world that has disappeared and is now almost forgotten; but which at one time held a prominent place in the Paris of the Empire. I allude to that gipsy band, guerillas of art, rebels against

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conventional philosophy and literature, fantastic to the very uttermost, which had insolently ensconced itself before the Louvre and the Institute, and which Henri Murger —not without embellishing and poetizing the remembrance of it—has celebrated under the title of *Bohemia*. We will call my personage Desroches. I had met him at a ball of the Quartier Latin, with some friends, one summer evening. I had returned home very late to my little room in the Rue de Tournon, and was sleeping as soundly as a dormouse the next morning, when suddenly there appeared, at the foot of my bed, a man in a black coat, a scanty, threadbare coat, of that peculiar black only seen on policemen and undertakers.

"I come from M. Desroches."

"M. Desroches? What M. Desroches?" said I, rubbing my eyes, for my recollections that morning obstinately refused to be aroused as quickly as my body.

"M. Desroches of the *Figaro*. You spent the evening together last night; he is in the lock-up, and he refers to you."

"M. Desroches—ah, to be sure—

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exactly—he refers to me—well, tell them to let him out!"

"Beg pardon, there is fifteen-pence to pay!"

"Fifteen-pence! Why?"

"It is the custom."

I gave the fifteen-pence. The black-coated man disappeared, and I remained sitting on my bed, half dreaming, and not clearly understanding in consequence of what eccentric adventures I found myself brought to the point of ransoming, like a new brother of mercy—for fifteen-pence—a contributor to the *Figaro* from the clutches not of the Turks, but of the police.

I had no long time for reflection. Five minutes later, Desroches, freed from his fetters, came smiling into my room.

"A thousand pardons, my dear colleague; all this is the fault of the *Raisins muscats*. Yes! the *Raisins muscats*, my first article, which appeared yesterday in the *Figaro*. Confounded *Raisins muscats!* You see, I had got the payment—my first payment—and it flew to my head. We patrolled the whole quarter after we left you, indeed

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towards the end my recollections are somewhat mixed; still I have a sensation as if I had received a kick somewhere or another. Then I found myself in the station-house—a charming night indeed! First

of all they poked me into the furthest den—the black hole, you know. How it smelt! But I made the gentlemen laugh—they were good enough to take me into their guard-room—we talked, played cards

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They insisted on my reading them *les Raisins muscats*, such a success! . . . It is really astonishing the taste these policemen have!"

Imagine my stupefaction, and the effect produced on my simple and provincial boyish mind by the revelation of these eccentric literary habits and customs! And the colleague who thus related his adventures was a little round fellow, well brushed and shaved, affecting polite manners, and whose white gaiters and frock coat of *bourgeois* cut made the most marked contrast with his extravagant gestures and the grimaces of his buffoon-like features. He astonished me, half frightened me, saw that he did so, and evidently took pleasure in exaggerating, in honour of me, the cynicism of his paradoxes.

"I like you," he said, as he took his leave; "come and see me next Sunday afternoon. I live in a delightful spot, near the Castle of Fogs, on the hillside looking over Saint-Ouen, you know it well—the vineyard of Gérard de Nerval! I will introduce you to my wife; she's worth taking a journey to see. Happily, too, I have just received a

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barrel of new wine; we will drink it in mugs, as one does at the wholesale dealers at Bercy, and we will sleep in the cellar. Then, too, a friend of mine, a Dominican monk, unfrocked only a day or two ago, is coming to read me a drama in five acts. You will hear

it; superb subject! full of rape and ravishment! Now you understand. Gérard de Nerval's vineyard; don't forget the address!"

All came to pass exactly as Desroches had promised. We drank out of the cask the new wine, and in the evening the pretended

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Dominican read us his drama. Dominican or not, he was a fine handsome Breton, with large shoulders, well fitted for the frock, and with something of the preacher in the rounding of his sentences and gestures. He has since made himself a name in literature. His drama did not much astonish me, but it must be owned that, after an afternoon spent in Gérard de Nerval's vineyard—in what Desroches called his home—astonishment was no longer easy to attain.

Before climbing the slopes I had bethought me of re-reading the exquisite pages that Gérard, the lover of *Sylvie*, in his *Promenades et Souvenirs*, has consecrated to the description of this northern declivity of Montmartre, a scrap of country inclosed in the midst of Paris, and therefore so much the more cherished and precious: "There still remain to us a certain number of gently sloping hillsides, girdled with thick green hedges, which the barberry decorates alternately with its violet flowers and purple berries. There are there windmills, rustic inns and summer-houses, elysian fields and deep-cut silent lanes; there may even be found a vineyard, the last

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of the celebrated vintage of Montmartre, which in the time of the Romans rivalled those of Argenteuil and Suresnes. Year by year this humble hillside loses a row of its stunted vine-stocks, swallowed up by the stone quarry. Ten years ago I could have bought it for four hundred pounds. I should have built in this vineyard so dainty an edifice! a little villa in the Pompeiian style, with an *impluvium* and a *cella*."

In this poet's dream of antiquity lived my friend Desroches. There! horrible antithesis! did he present to me, under a blue summer sky, in the shade of an arbour of flowering elder, all musical with the hum of bees, an androgynous monster in the dress of a carter, blue smock, short velveteen skirt, cap striped with red perched over the ear, a whip drawn round her neck:

"M. Alphonse Daudet, Mme. Desroches!"

For this monster was really his wife, his legitimate wife, always arrayed in this costume,

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which pleased her fancy, and than which, certainly, nothing could have been found to suit better with her masculine voice and face. Smoking, spitting, swearing, with all the vices

of a man, she kept the whole household in awe; her husband in the first place, who was much henpecked, and, besides, two thin daughters—her daughters!—of strange and boylike aspect, and who, too early matured

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and run to seed, promised at thirteen and fifteen to become some day all that their mother was at forty. It certainly was worth the trouble, as he had said, to have a sight of such a household.

Desroches was nevertheless the son of a rich and orderly Parisian manufacturer; a jeweller, I believe. His father had disowned him more than once, and now made him a small allowance. It is not rare to find in France instances of these lunatics, positive scourges of Heaven, appearing suddenly in the midst of peaceful families, troubling their calm repose, putting in circulation their accumulated gold, smiting the *bourgeosie* in short, in its tenderest spot. And I have known several of these ducklings set under hens, which, when once out of the shell, rush to the water. The water, to them, is art, literature, that trade open to all, without patent or diploma. Desroches, when he left college, had dabbled in art—in all the arts. He had begun with painting, and the career through the studios of this cool, orderly and reserved cynic, who preserved in the midst of the wildest fancies, the indelible stigma of

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his *bourgeois* origin, has become a standing legend. The attempt at painting proving a failure, Desroches attacked literature. Inspired perhaps by his vineyard, he managed to accomplish the *Raisins muscats*—a hundred lines—a complete article! Vainly afterwards, did he try to write another; he could never again find the right inspiration, and reached the age of forty, having as the work of a lifetime, written the *Raisins muscats*.

The conversation and sallies of friend Desroches amused me; but his household did not suit me at all. I never returned to Montmartre, but I crossed the river sometimes in order to visit him at the tavern in the rue des Martyrs. The Brasserie (tavern) of les Martyrs, nowadays the quiet resort of the worthy linendrapers of the neighbourhood for their evening game of draughts, represented then a power in literature. The Brasserie sat in judgment; and made famous whom it would; and in the overpowering silence of the Empire, Paris was aroused by the noise made there every evening, by eighty or a hundred choice spirits, while smoking their pipes and drinking their beer. They

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were called Bohemians, and the name did not displease them. The *Figaro* of that day, non-political, and appearing only once a week, was generally their rostrum.

The tavern was a sight worth seeing—we used to call it "THE BRASSERIE," simply, as the Romans spoke of Rome as "THE CITY,"—it was worth seeing about eleven o'clock at night, with all its cheerful hubbub of voices, and clouded by the smoke of all those pipes!

Murger reigned absolute, at the middle table; Murger, who was at once the Homer and Columbus of this little world, and to which his exquisite fancy lent a rose-coloured tinge. Decorated with the Legion of Honour, and henceforth famous, publishing his stories in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, he nevertheless continued to frequent *the Brasserie*, "to keep alive," he said, "his impressions of the worthy folk he had described, and also to receive their homage and applause." He was pointed out to me—a large, melancholy head, the

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eyes reddened, the beard scanty, sure signs of very indifferent Parisian blood. He lived at Marlotte, in the forest of Fontainebleau ; constantly to be seen with a gun on his shoulder, he pretended to shoot, but it was more a search after health than after partridges or

hares. The fact of his abode in the village had drawn thither quite a Parisian colony of men and women, natives of the asphalt and the tavern, producing a strange contrast under the great oaks ; there are traces of it in Marlotte to this day. Ten years after the death of Murger, who died, as all know, in

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the Hospital Dubois—I was there with some friends at the famous inn kept by Mother Antony. An old peasant sat drinking near us, such a peasant as Balzac describes, soil-stained and weatherbeaten. An old hag, arrayed in tatters, and a red handkerchief round her head, came to fetch him away. She called him drunkard, spendthrift, good-for-nothing; while he tried to make her drink with him.

"Your wife is none too gentle!" said some one when she was gone.

"She is not my wife; she is my mistress!" replied the old peasant.

You should have heard the tone in which this was uttered. Evidently the good man had known Murger and his friends, and sought to lead a Bohemian life according to his lights.

To return to the Brasserie. As my eyes became accustomed to the smarting caused by the smoke, I could see to the right and left, and in every corner, well-known faces.

Each great man had his table, which became the nucleus, the centre of a whole clique of admirers.

Pierre Dupont, old already at forty-five,

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fat and stooping, his mild bovine eye scarcely visible beneath the drooping eyelids, sat, elbows on table, trying to sing some of the political or rustic songs with swinging rhythm, vibrating still with the fair dreams of '48; or re-echoing the many sounds of work and labour of the Croix-Rousse, and scented with the thousand perfumes of the Lyonnaise valley. But there was no longer any voice; burnt away by alcohol, it was but a hoarse rattle.

"You require the fresh air of the fields, my poor Pierre," said Gustave Mathieu, the bard of *les Bons Vins*, of *le Coq Gaulois*, and of *les Hirondelles*. This last, who came of good *bourgeois* blood in Nevers, had travelled much in his younger days, and retained from his travels, a passion for fresh air and wide horizons. He found all this round his little house at Bois-le-Roi, and when he came to the Brasserie, it was only to walk through it smiling, erect, with a Henri IV. air, and at all times of the year with a wild flower in his button-hole.

Dupont died sadly enough in the black manufacturing town of Lyons. Mathieu,

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tough and healthy as a vine-stock, long survived him. It is only a few years ago, that after a short illness his friends laid him to rest in the little cemetery of Bois-le-Roi—a cemetery only separated by a simple hedge from the neighbouring fields—a true poet's

resting-place, where he sleeps beneath roses in the shadow of the oak-trees.

The evening on which I first saw Gustave Mathieu, there sat near him a great spare red-headed fellow with the braggart airs of a corsair, who imitated his voice and copied his movements; this was Fernand Desnoyers,

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an original, who wrote *Bras-Noir*, a pantomime in verse! On the other side of the table some one was arguing with Dupont; it

was Reyer, who, nervous and excitable, jotted down the airs which occurred with so much facility to the poet—Reyer, the future author of *la Statue*, of *Sigurd*, and many other fine works.

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What memories rise before me at the mere sound of the name of the Brasserie! How many faces did I there behold for the first time amidst the reflections and gleams of the beer-glasses and the canopy of thick smoke!

Let us choose at hazard among the numbers of the departed and the lesser band which yet survives. Here is Monselet, delicate prose writer, yet more dainty poet, smiling, curled, plump. M. Cupid might be taken for a gallant abbé of the olden time; one looks at his back for the short mantle fluttering like a pair of wings. Champfleury, then leader of a school, father of realism, and confounding in one and the same passion the music of Wagner, old pottery, and pantomime. Pottery, in the end, won the day, and Champfleury, transported to the height of his ambition, is now curator of the ceramic museum at Sèvres.

Here too is Castagnary in double-breasted waistcoat, *à la Robespierre*, cut out of the velvet of some old armchair. Chief clerk in a lawyer's office, he used to escape from his work to come and recite the *Châtiments* of Victor Hugo, with all their delightful flavour

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of forbidden fruit. He is surrounded, applauded; but he rushes away in search of Courbet, he must see Courbet, he wishes to consult with Courbet upon his *Philosophy of Art exemplified in the* Salon *of* 1857. Without altogether neglecting art, and while still contributing with lively pen more than one remarkable page to our annual Salon, the shrewd native of Saintonge, always smiling a mocking smile beneath his long drooping moustache, has little by little become absorbed in politics. He was first a municipal councillor, then editor of the *Siècle*, now a member of the Council of State, and no longer recites verses nor wears a red velvet waistcoat.

Here also is Charles Baudelaire, tormented in art by a thirst for the undiscoverable, in philosophy by the alluring terror of the unknown. Victor Hugo said of him that he had invented a perfectly new shudder; and indeed by no one has the heart of humanity been so well persuaded to speak aloud its secrets; no one has searched more deeply for those flowers of evil, startling and strange as tropical blossoms, with poison lurking in

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their very core, which lie in the mysterious depths of the human soul. Patient and delicate artist, weighing carefully the turn of every phrase, the choice of every word, Baudelaire, by a cruel irony of fate, died paralyzed, his intelligence remaining intact, as the mute complaint of his black eye sorrowfully testified, but incapable of expressing his thoughts save by a confusedly murmured oath mechanically repeated. Correct and cold, of paradoxical politeness, his wit as keen as English steel, he astonished the frequenters of the Brasserie by drinking foreign liqueurs in company with Constantin Guys the designer, or Malassis the publisher.

This last was a publisher of a kind unknown nowadays. Witty and well-read in curious by-ways of literature, he squandered royally a fine provincial fortune in publishing the writings of men who pleased his fancy. He too is dead; died smiling, with scanty fortune left, but without a complaint. And it is not without emotion that I recall that pale mocking face, lengthened by the points of a red beard—a Mephistopheles of the time of the Valois.

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Alphonse Duchesne and Delvau appear also in a corner of the tavern—two more who have joined the majority. It was a singular fate which pursued this generation, so early laid low, not one having passed the age of forty! Delvau, a Parisian, connoisseur of his Paris, admiring its beauties, loving its defects, offspring of Mercier and of Rétif de la Bretonne, whose choice little volumes, full of small insignificant facts and picturesque observations, have become the delight of the literary epicure and the joy of the bibliophile. Alphonse Duchesne still hot over his great quarrel with Francisque Sarcey, who, opposing the standard of the Normal School to that of the Bohemians, had just launched forth into literature with a warlike article entitled *Les Mélancoliques de Brasserie* (the melancholy haunters of the tavern).

It was at the Brasserie that Alphonse Duchesne and Delvau wrote those "Junius' Letters" which were brought every week to the *Figaro* by a mysterious messenger, and which convulsed the whole of Paris. Villemessant swore by that mysterious Junius. He was clearly a great personage—every-

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thing pointed to it—the style of the letters, their curt yet well-bred tone, a faint perfume of nobility and the old faubourg clinging tenderly to them. What then was his rage

when the mask was dropped, and he learned that these aristocratic pages were written day by day by two needy Bohemians at a beer-shop table! Poor Delvau! poor Duchesne! Villemessant never forgave them.

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I leave out many, for it would take a whole volume to describe the frequenters of the Brasserie table by table. Here is the table of the thinkers; they say nothing, neither do they write; they only think. They are ad-

mired on the faith of their own word; it is said they are deep as a well. It is possible to believe this when one watches them filling themselves with beer. Bald heads, flowing beards, with an odour of strong tobacco, cabbage soup, and philosophy.

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A little further on are pilot coats, Spanish birettas, cries of animals, rough jokes, puns, in a glorious confusion; there crowded together are artists, sculptors, painters. In the midst of all this appears a refined and gentle head—that of Alexandre Leclerc—whose fantastic frescoes, destroyed by the Prussians, once adorned the walls of the Moulin-de-Pierre inn at Châtillon.

One day the poor fellow was discovered hanged; he had strangled himself sitting down, and pulling the rope tight, among a crowd of tombstones at the top of the cemetery of Père-Lachaise, just at the spot where Balzac points out the immensity of Paris to Rastignac. In my recollections of the Brasserie, Alexandre Leclerc always appears in the best of spirits, singing songs of Picardy; and these rural airs, airs of his native province, seemed to spread around his table in the tobacco-laden atmosphere, a penetrating and poetical aroma of cornfields and green plains.

I had nearly forgotten the women, for there were women too; former models, fine creatures, but somewhat faded in appearance. Queer physiognomies and strange names,

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nicknames that spoke of low haunts and aristocratic affectations: *Titine de Barancy* and *Louise Coup-de-Couteau.* Curious specimens of a singular refinement, having passed from hand to hand, and caught from their thousand and one *liaisons* a veneer of artistic erudition. They express their opinions on every subject, and according to the lover of the moment, declare themselves materialists or idealists, catholics or atheists. Touching, and at the same time somewhat ridiculous.

Amongst them were a few new recruits, quite young, admitted by the dreaded areopagus; but the majority were composed of those who had grown old in the service, thereby acquiring a kind of undisputed authority. Then there were the pseudo-widows of well-known authors and artists, who were busily engaged in educating some raw provincial fellow just arrived from his province. All these people were rolling and smoking cigarettes, sending up their little spiral clouds of thin blue smoke amongst the thick gray fog of the pipes and breaths.

The beer flows, the waiters rush about, the discussions become more animated, and in

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the midst of the shouting and upraised arms, the tossing of many shaggy and mane-like locks, Desroches screaming louder, gesticulating more violently than any, stands on a table, looking as if he were swimming over an ocean of heads, leading and dominating with his clown's voice, the noisy uproar of the thronged room. He looks well thus, with an inspired air, his shirt unbuttoned, his cravat floating half untied, true descendant of Rameau's nephew.

Every night he comes there to forget his worries, to intoxicate himself with words and beer, to secure collaborators, to relate his literary projects, to lie to himself, and to forget that his home has become unbearable, that he is incapable of settling to any work, that it would even be impossible for him to re-write the *Raisins muscats.* No doubt amongst the medley at the tavern there were some noble minds, some serious thinkers, and at times a fine verse or an eloquent paradox would lighten the atmosphere, like a current of fresh, pure air, dispelling the smoke of the pipes. But with the exception of a few men of talent, were not most of

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them Desroches! For a few moments of fine inspiration how many dull and wasted hours!

Then also what a sad feeling the next day. What cruel awakenings! what sickening discouragement! What disgust for such a life, without having courage enough to change it. Look at Desroches; he no longer laughs; his grin subsides. He is thinking of his children, who are growing up; of his wife, who is ageing and sinking lower and lower, with her whip, her cap, her smock, her carter's costume, thought so original the first time it was worn for a masqued ball, and now become so repulsive.

When his fits of depression were upon him, Desroches used to disappear and go off into the provinces, dragging his strange family after him.

Now selling watches; then actor at Odessa, bailiff at Brussels; or companion of a mountebank. What extraordinary callings had he not tried? But he soon returned, tired and disgusted even with that.

One day, in the Bois de Boulogne, he tried to hang himself, but the keepers found him

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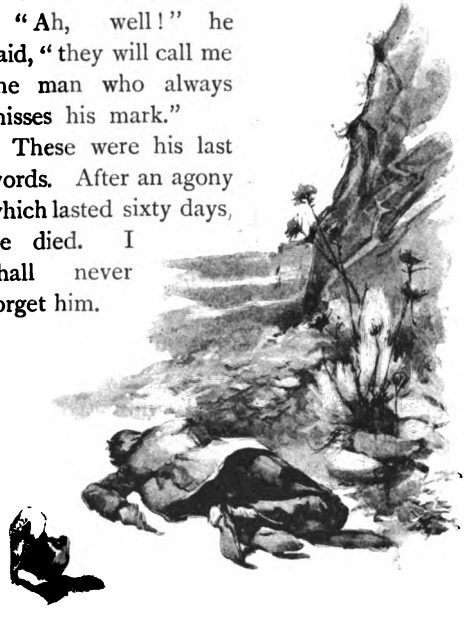
and took him down. He was even chaffed about it at the *brasserie*, and himself spoke of his adventure with a little forced laugh. Shortly after, determined to put an end to his life, he threw himself into one of those terrible quarries—an abyss of chalk and clay—which abound round the Paris fortifications. There he lay all night, his ribs crushed, his wrists and thighs broken. He was still alive when he was taken out.

"Ah, well!" he said, "they will call me the man who always misses his mark."

These were his last words. After an agony which lasted sixty days, he died. I shall never forget him.



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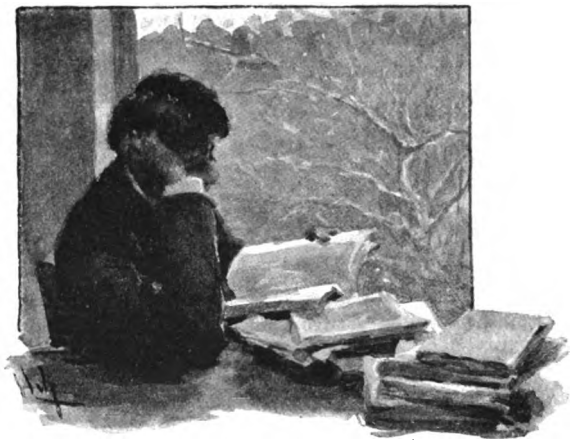

THE STORY OF MY BOOKS.

JACK.

In front of me, upon the table, stands a photograph by Nadar, representing a young lad of eighteen or twenty years of age. A delicate, sickly-looking face, with vague and dreamy features, clear, playful and child-like eyes, strangely contrasting, by their vivacity, with the sadness of the weak and faded mouth and its drawn look—the mouth of a poor man, who has suffered much. It is the portrait of Raoul D——, the "Jack" of my

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novel, just as I knew him towards the end of 1868; just as I used to see him coming towards the little house I inhabited at Champrosay, shivering, bent, with rounded shoulders, his arms clasping tightly his scanty wrap across his narrow chest, and coughing with a sound that echoed like a death knell. We were neighbours, separated only by the woods of Sénart. Already ill, crushed by the horrible factory life, to which a caprice of his mother's lover had condemned him, he had come in search of rest and quiet to a large lonely building in the country, where he led a kind of Robinson Crusoe existence, with a sack of potatoes, and a running account for bread at the Soisy baker's shop. He had no money, not even enough to take the train to Paris; and when the longing to see his mother became too unbearable, he trudged the eighteen tedious miles on foot, and came back, worn out and exhausted, but thoroughly happy; for he adored his mother, speaking of her with a tender, admiring effusiveness, something like the respect that the half-breed feels for the white woman, for the superior being. "Mamma is a canoness," he said to

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me one day, with so satisfied an air that I did not dare to ask him of what chapter. Nevertheless, several things he had said, made me understand the character of this misguided woman, who, notwithstanding her love of rank and her aristocratic pretensions, had consented to make a mere mechanic of her son. Did she not tell him on one occasion that he was the son of the Marquis de P——, a well-known name under the Empire? And the notion of being the son of a nobleman amused the poor fellow, and threw a glimmer of vanity over his sad and miserable life and low coffee-house fare. Later on, forgetting her first avowal, she told him his father was an artillery officer, without its being possible to guess on which occasion she had lied, or if she spoke truthfully, at the haphazard of her capricious vanity and overcrowded recollections. In my book, this characteristic detail has shocked many of my readers; drawn from the very life, it seemed an exaggeration of the psychologist, who, however, would have shrunk from such an invention.

Well, even this, Raoul forgave his mother,

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and he never showed any greater trace of bitterness than a sad, deprecating smile, which seemed to ask pardon for the irresponsible offender. "It cannot be helped; it is just like her." It must not be forgotten, however, that the lower class is devoid of much refinement and delicacy in its ideas of morality, and Raoul formed part of that class, among whom he had been thrown from the early age of eleven, after a few short months spent in a fashionable school at Auteuil. Of this attempt at education he had retained only a few vague notions, names of authors, titles of books, and a love of study which he had never been able to satisfy. Now however, when all physical exertion had been strictly forbidden him by the doctor, and that my library shelves were thrown open to him, he revelled in them, seizing upon the books with the avidity of a hungered man. He would go off laden with books for his evenings and for his nights—those long weary nights of fever and cough, which he spent in his dimly-lighted house, shivering in his miserable bed, even though he had heaped upon it the whole of

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his wretched wardrobe. But above all, he enjoyed reading in my house, seated in the window recess of the room I worked in, looking out on the fields and the Seine.

"Here I seem to understand better," he would say. Sometimes I helped him to understand; for, moved by a kind of superstitious feeling, an ambitious turn of mind, he always chose difficult authors—Montaigne, La Bruyère. "One of Balzac's or Dickens's novels amused him too much," he said, and failed to give him the proud satisfaction of conquering a difficulty, which the laborious perusal of classical work afforded him. In the pauses of rest I made him talk to me of his life and of the working class, which he intuitively judged with a keenness of observation far beyond his age and position. He felt the painful as well as the ridiculous side of things, and the grandeur of certain aspects of factory life. For instance, the starting of the machine I describe in *Jack* is one of his 'prentice recollections. But what I found most interesting was the awakening and refining of this mind, which revived like a dormant memory under

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the exciting influence of the books and our conversations. A change was even taking place in the physical being raised up by the intellectual effort. Unfortunately the exigencies of life were about to separate us; and while I returned to Paris for the winter, Raoul taking up his workman's tools, engaged himself in the workshops of the Lyons railway company. During the following six months, I only saw him two or three times; each time thinner and more altered, and in a state of utter despair, feeling that he was decidedly too weak for his work. "Well, leave it, we will find you another." But he insisted upon struggling on, lest he should grieve his mother; feeling himself wounded in the pride of his manhood. Not aware that he was in so dangerous a condition, I dared not insist, fearing above all things lest I should make him dissatisfied with his lot, and take this poor artisan with a romantic name, out of his proper sphere.

Time went by. One day I received a few shaky and piteous lines: "Ill; laid up at the hospital *de la Charité*, ward *St. Jean de Dieu.*" It was there I found him again, lying on a

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stretcher; the winter, which was drawing to an end, having been so severe that there was not a vacant bed in the ward devoted to the consumptive patients. The first bed left vacant by death would be given to Raoul. He seemed to me very seriously ill; the eyes sunken, the voice hoarse, the imagination cruelly affected by the prevailing sadness, the moans, the harrowing coughs, the sister of mercy's prayer at nightfall, and the chaplain, who in red slippers brought his ministering comfort to the agonies of the dying. He was terrified at the idea of dying there. I tried to reassure him, although I could not help expressing my surprise that his mother did not bring him home to nurse. "It was I who refused," replied the unhappy victim; "they were adding to their house, building—I should have been in the way." Then, answering the silent reproach he saw in my eyes, he added, "Oh, mamma is very kind; she writes to me and comes to see me." I am convinced that he lied; his miserable condition, the bareness of his hospital coverlet, the absence of any little delicacy, not even an orange, spoke of his abandoned and

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neglected state. Seeing him so lonely, so unhappy, I conceived the idea of making him write down what he saw around him, what he too was undergoing, convinced that his mind would thereby take a higher view of his surroundings. And then who knows? it might become a pecuniary aid to the proud fellow who could with difficulty be induced to accept a gift of money. At the first suggestion, the invalid raised himself up, clinging with both hands to the wooden handles hanging over the head of his bed.

"Really, is it really true—do you think I could write?"

"I am certain of it."

As it turned out, I had hardly to change ten words in the four articles Raoul sent me from the hospital. Their tone was simple and sincere, and of an intense realism well suited to their title "Life in a Hospital." Those who may have read these short pages in an ephemeral medical review, the *Journal d'Enghien*, will assuredly never have supposed that they were written from a hospital bed with such efforts and at the cost of such feverish heat. He was so happy too when

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I brought him the few gold pieces earned by his prose! He could hardly believe it, turning them over and over again, while in the beds near him, faces full of curiosity leaned forward at the unusual sound. From that day forth, the hospital presented a less dreary aspect to him, cheered by the study he was making of it. A short time after, thanks to a spontaneous effort of youth, he was able to leave; but the house-surgeon did not conceal from me the dangerous state he was in. The injury to the lung still remained incurable, ready to break forth afresh at any moment, whenever the unfortunate fellow should resume his hard mechanic's life. I then remembered that when I was the same age, and in a critical state of health, a few months spent in Algeria had been of the greatest benefit to me. I wrote to the prefect of Algiers, with whom I had a slight acquaintance, asking him for some employment for Raoul. No doubt M. Le Myre de Vilers, now the representative of France at Madagascar, does not remember this, but I have not forgotten with what alacrity and good nature—thereby doubly enhancing the

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kindliness—he answered my request, offering Raoul a situation in the official surveyor's office; five hours' work per diem, work without fatigue in the most lovely country in the world, in the midst of fresh green scenery and with the blue sea spread out before his eyes.

For Raoul this departure seemed quite like a fairy tale—the long journey, the happy thought that he would never return to the factory, that he would no longer have dirty black hands, and that he would be able to gain his daily bread without killing himself by such cruel and uncongenial work. In my family circle I am surrounded by kind beings with large and noble hearts, who had been touched by this unfortunate lad's sufferings, and they vied with each other in contributing to his comfort. "I will pay the journey," said our good grandmamma; another took charge of his linen, another of his clothes, for he must throw aside the blue jersey and dirty working-suit of the factory. Raoul accepted everything now that he had a situation, and the certainty of being able to refund all expenses. Only fancy, sixty pounds a year! Besides, he would write; he would

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send me articles. He planned many other schemes of happiness, which he discussed with me on the eve of his departure: his mother must come to him, and with him take up the thread again of a more happy and dignified life. She had lived long enough with others; it was his turn now. Looking well in his new clothes, his eyes bright, his face once again handsome and intelligent as he stood speaking to me, he no longer seemed the wretched forlorn creature I had known formerly, but my companion, one of my own belongings, who was taking leave of me, and whom I was never to behold again.

He often wrote to me from Algiers, "I dream! I dream! It seems to me that I am in heaven!" He lived in one of the suburbs, separated from the sea by an orange-grove, near one of my friends, a painter, to whom I had recommended him, as well as to Charles Jourdan, who readily opened his large and hospitable house of Montriant to the poor exile. His office work was light, and gave him ample leisure to continue his education, following the programme of read-

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ing I had traced out for him. But it was already too late when we rescued him from his misery. He had suffered so terribly, and so young! the wounds of childhood had deepened with manhood. "I have been very ill," Raoul wrote to me in a letter dated 18th June, 1870, "but thanks to an energetic treatment, I am up again, weak, very weak, it is true, and counting every step I take. During the fortnight of my convalescence, while I was unable to move out, my imagination took many a stroll with you through the forest, and we had many a talk in the large studio. My head was too weak to allow of my reading, and I was rather lonely and sad, immersed in day dreams, when the kind giant, Charles Jourdan, came to fetch me with a donkey, and carried me off to a house, which would be the dearest in the world to me, if Champrosay did not exist. At Montriant, the air is so pure, the view so lovely, the silence so deep, that I feel I am returning again to life. What a delightful fellow Jourdan is! so full of heart and youth! His study is a regular library, and I spend my days turning over the pages right and

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left, as I used to do at your house. He dictates to me his articles for the *Siècle* and *l'Histoire*. This morning we cut up the local administration in merciless style. . . ." The tone of his letter was cheerful, but one could feel a real fatigue running through it all; and towards the end the tall straight handwriting became sloping, the ink changed in colour; he had evidently been obliged to interrupt his letter and to complete it by degrees.

Then the war broke out, the siege followed. I heard no more about Raoul, and I forgot him. Which of us during those long five months thought of anything else but our unhappy country? Directly Paris was set free, amongst the piles of letters which covered my table, I found one from an Algerian doctor informing me that Raoul was very ill, and begged for some news of his mother; it would be an act of charity if I could send any. Why did the mother, who had likewise been warned, give no sign of life to her child? I have never known why. But on the 9th of February she received the following indignant lines from Charles

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Jourdan: "Madame, your son is at the hospital; he is dying. He asks for news of his mother. In the name of mercy send two words in your own handwriting to the child you will see no more!"

Shortly after the following news reached me:—

"Raoul died at the civilian hospital of Algiers on the 13th of February, after a long and painful agony. To the very last, he craved for the kiss his mother denied him. 'I suffer dreadfully,' he said to me, 'but I feel that one word from my mother would ease my pain.' That word never came, was never sent. . . . Believe me, that woman has been cruel and pitiless to her child. Raoul adored his mother; nevertheless, on his death bed he judged her with terrible severity. 'I can neither esteem her as a mother, nor as a woman; but my heart, which will so soon cease to beat, is full of her. I forgive her all the harm she has done me.' Raoul spoke about you a great deal before his death. In the midst of his sad life of suffering he was astonished at finding one tender and sweet recollection. 'Tell

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him that, at the moment of quitting this life, it is he and his dear wife whom I regret to lose.' I had become very intimate with the poor invalid you had sent us. I inhabit a large country place full of sunshine and flowers. I wished Raoul to come and go as he liked, but the gentle and excellent young man was always afraid of intruding. In these latter days, I begged him to come and be nursed at my house. He refused, and went to the hospital, pretending he would be better taken care of there. In reality the poor child felt his end approaching, and would not distress a friend with the sad sight of his death. . . ."

***

This is what real life brought before me. For a long time I only saw in this story one of the many thousand sorrows that cross our own sorrows. It had all taken place too near to me to attract my attention as a novelist. The study was hidden from me by personal emotion. One day at Champrosay, seated on the trunk of a tree by the side of Gustave Droz, in the autumn melancholy of the woods, within a few paces of the

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red brick building where so many of Raoul's hours of forlorn illness had been spent, I related to him the story of that miserable existence.

"What a fine book it would make!" Droz remarked, much moved.

From that day, putting aside the *Nabab*, which was then in process of construction, I started on this new track with the feverish haste, the tremblingly eager fingers, with which I begin and end all my books. In comparing the story of Raoul with that of Jack, it is easy to distinguish what is real from what is imaginary, or, at least—for I invent but little—what I have introduced from other sources. Raoul never lived at Indret, and he was never a stoker. Nevertheless he has often related to me how, at Havre, during his apprenticeship, the air, full of the sounds of travel—vibrating with the cries of the sailors, the blows of the hammers in the graving dock—sometimes filled him also with the longing to be afloat, and to accompany in its voyage round the world, one of those gigantic engines turned out by the house of Mazeline.

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The whole episode of Indret is imaginary. I wanted a great iron-manufacturing centre, and I hesitated between Creuzot and Indret. I decided in favour of the latter, on account of the river life, the scenes on the Loire and the port of Saint Nazaire. This gave occasion for a journey and for many expeditions during the summer of 1874. Having placed my little Jack there, I wished to know in what surroundings, among what human entities, I must make him live. I have spent many an hour in the isle of Indret, and haunted the vast workshops both during the working hours and in those, so much richer in impressions, of rest. I have seen the house of the Roudics with its little garden; I have gone up and down the Loire from Saint Nazaire, in a crazy boat which rolled as much and seemed as drunk as its old boatman, who was greatly astonished that I did not rather take the rail at Basse Indre, or the steamboat at Paimbœuf; and the wharf, the transatlantic steamers, the engine rooms, visited in detail, furnished me with closely kept notes for my study.

On these excursions, I was nearly always

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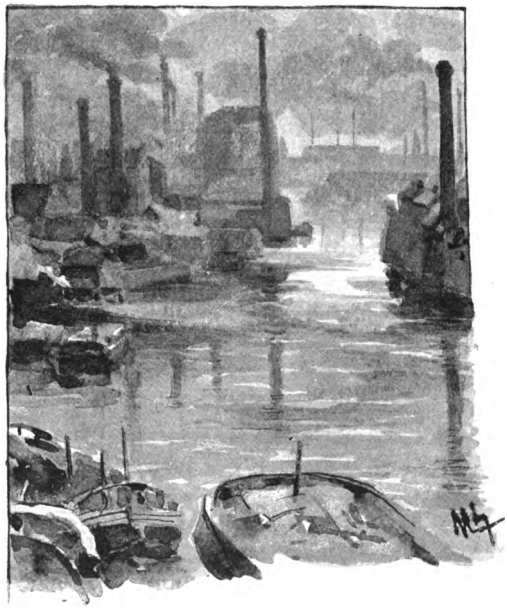
accompanied by my wife and my little boy—I had only one at that time—a dear little pickle



with ruddy curls, who displayed at these amazingly novel scenes, his simple and

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childish surprise. When the expedition promised to be too rough, the mother and child awaited me in a little inn at Piriac, a real Breton inn, white and square as a die, on the edge of the great ocean; it owned a huge bedroom with rustic beds; one of them let into the whitewashed wall, cupboard fashion; the chimney piece was adorned with sponges and sea-horses, as at the Roudics; and two little windows fastened by that transverse bar common to the coast, overlooked, one the pier and the vast expanse of sea, while from the other could be seen orchards, a bit of the church, and the cemetery full of black crosses, crowding and jostling each other, as if the rolling of the neighbouring waves, and the wind from the open sea, shook even the tombs of the sea-faring population. Beneath us, a thought noisy on a Sunday evening, was the tap-room, where one could hear sung the old airs of the district, which re-live again in my book. Sometimes, when the great brigadier Mangin was there—he really was the brigadier Mangin, for I have not even changed his name or rank—our host would allow the benches

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to be pushed back, and a dance to take place, "with a singing accompaniment." Thither came with their wives, the fishermen and sailors, who had become friendly with us, taking us in their boats to breakfast on the island of Dumet, or even to some rock out at sea. They knew that a little swell frightened neither my little Parisian nor his mother; and one of them, an old whaler, once said to us, that, when he looked at Monsieur, Madame and the little boy, always travelling together, it reminded him, begging our pardon, of three North Sea blowers which always moved in company: father, mother, and young whale.

In all our excursions there was no question of anything but Jack. We seemed to live so entirely with him, that to-day, in thinking of this corner of Brittany, I imagine my poor Raoul must have been of the party. When we returned to Paris, I did not set to work at once. There was still wanting to my work, notes on the life of the Parisian work-girl. I only knew of it all that may be learned in the street, of its misery, debauches, struggles; but what of the factory, the wine shop, the tea

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gardens on the banks of the lake of *Saint-Mandé*, where I have represented the wedding of Belisarius; the dust of *les Buttes-Chaumont*, where I have dawdled away many a Sunday afternoon, drinking sour beer and watching the kite flying? As for the hospital which holds so large and so mournful a place in the life of the lower class, I knew it well.

I had spent long hours there, during Raoul's illness, and had also derived much information from his articles. But as the Goncourt brothers had described the hospital of *La Charité* once and for all in *Sœur Philomène*, I could not, and after them, begin again upon the same subject. Therefore, I barely touched upon it, and only in very brief passages. In the third part of *Jack*, the recollections were those of the siege, the National Guard, which were of the greatest service to me, and the workmen's battalion, with which I scoured Paris and the outskirts during four months, sleeping in the damp wooden sheds, or on the straw of cattle trucks; and in these experiences, learning to love the people even in their vices, caused as they are by misery and ignorance. The

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Belisarius of my book—Offehmer was his real name—was with me in the *sixth* of the *ninety-sixth*, and I can see him yet, with his huge and deformed feet, breaking the line by his limp, always the last of the company in the interminable rue de Charenton. Denis Poulot's book, *Le Sublime*, to which Zola's fine novel has since given popularity, was also of great help to me, filled as it is with typical expressions and the special slang pertaining to certain trades, just as I also found in the *Manuel Roret* and the *Grandes Usines* of Turgan, many technical details of the working life of these great factories which were new to me. This then, is the foundation of a novel; the preparation, slow as possible and full and close, from which must spring for the writer, the invention, the style, the real merit of the work. And to think that there are people who, two months after a new publication, ask: "When will your next book appear? Come! get on, lazy bones."

The failures and their surroundings cost me much less trouble and research. I had only to look behind me in my five and twenty years' experience of Paris. The high priest

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Dargenton existed, just as I have drawn him, with his forehead out of all proportion, his imaginary fits, his blind and fierce egoism of an impotent Buddha. Not one of his "bitter sayings" is invented. I gathered them fresh, as they fell from his fruitful lips; his faith in his own genius was just such as I have described it at full length in my book; solemn, black and gloomy as a country sheriff, he no doubt smiled scornfully on reading it, and said, "Envy! mere envy!" Labassindre may be seen ten times over in a café well known on the boulevards, during summer, the idle times of such actors. Hirsch is a more peculiar type: twenty years ago I used daily to see this would-be doctor, with a bottle of ammonia peeping out of the pocket of his vast nankin waistcoat; dirty, infatuated, bent upon visiting and drugging whom he could, notwithstanding his lack of diploma. He had always some victim in hand, upon whom he was studying the effect of unusual and dangerous medicines; then, for want of patients, he took to dosing himself, and died at the hospital of Bordeaux, in consequence of his own reme-

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dies. Moronval, the mulatto, was a living being too, he wrote in the *Revue Coloniale*, and after 1870, was for some time a deputy. He inhabited, when I knew him, a little house with a garden, at Batignolles, and lived upon half a dozen little niggers sent over from Port-au-Prince, or Tahiti, who were at once pupils and servants, going to market for him, and blacking boots, while they construed the *Epitome*.

Of the real and living drama I have in the main kept the principal personage, and the chief outlines of his hard life and sad death. I did not know the mother, but I have represented her as I guessed her from the narrative of her child. True to life again, and excellent as truth itself, was the noble Doctor Rivals, a saint, a hero, who had frequented for thirty years those roads so familiar to Jack and his novelist. For fear of annoying him and of offending his great modesty I dare not here give his name, which a whole population of peasants has blessed for two generations. I trust he will forgive me for having in the composition of my story worked into his noble life—so open and upright—a

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dark drama drawn from other sources.[1] I had nearly forgotten two other witnesses of Raoul's sad misery, the gamekeeper's wife, who still inhabits the humble cottage in the forest, where more than once the poor little fellow was given a place by the fire and at the table; and old Salé, to whom I left her real name, the old hooked-nosed peasant, the dread of the poor abandoned child, who dreamt of her during the long nights in his hospital-bed. It is sometimes a weakness of mine to leave to my models their real names, and to persuade myself that were the name transformed, it would take away something from the integrity of the creation, which is nearly always a reminiscence of real life, of haunting, wearying phantoms, only laid when I fix them in my work as life-like as possible.

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All this foundation well established, my figures on the scene, my chapters arranged in their place, I set to work. My workshop

[1] He is dead now, his name was Doctor Rouffy; his bust adorns the pretty village green at Draveil.

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was still the large study with two high and wide windows in the Palace Lamoignon. In the first pages of the chapter entitled *Jack en ménage*, you may see the horizon of artisan dwellings, of zinc roofs, of tall factory chimneys bound round with iron cordage, which through the streaming panes and the fog of Parisian daylight, greeted my view whenever I raised my eyes from the paper. In the evening, all the windows crowded together in these tall frontages were lighted on every floor, revealing shadows of brave toilers, figures bending over their work far into the night, especially towards New Year's Day, the stalls and booths of which were supplied chiefly by this colony of toy-sellers. But the best pages of all were written at Champrosay, where the first blossoming lilac saw us arrive for a summer residence, often prolonged till the appearance of the first snows.

The best guarded, the most carefully closed of our Paris houses, are yet open to many unforeseen distractions. It may be the friend who brings for your sympathy his joy or his anxiety; the morning paper

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full of stirring news; the shameless bore who will not be denied; and the mill round of society; dinners, first nights, from which the observer, the painter of modern manners, has scarcely the right to absent himself. In the country, the space is vast, the air fresh, time seems endless; and free to dispose at will of the long days and of self, one feels above all, the security of this independence, the reassuring sensation of being really alone with one's idea. It is an orgie of thought and of work. I never felt it more so than when writing *Jack*. This time of unceasing production has left to me delightful memories. Long before daylight, I was installed at my white wood table close to my bed in the dressing-room. I wrote by lamplight, beneath a skylight pearled with dew, which reminded me of my early years of poverty. Cats and other roamers of the night prowled upon the roof, scratching the tiles, an owl hooted, cattle lowed in the warm straw of a stable close by; and without glancing at the alarum-clock ticking in front of me, without lifting my eyes to the gradual lightening of the dawn, I knew the

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hour by the crowing of the cocks, by the sounds of movement in the neighbouring farm, whence rose a clatter of wooden shoes, of bucket-handles falling as the beasts were watered; gruff voices hailing each other in the chill grey of early day, and the clamour, the cackling and flapping of heavy wings. Then upon the road, the sleepy tramp of workpeople passing by in gangs; and a little later, a flock of children running to the school three miles off, sounding like the passing flight of a covey of partridges.

What excited me and urged me to this breathless haste of labour, was that, from the month of June, and long before I had finished my book, Paul Dalloz had begun the publication of it in the *Moniteur*. I have the habit, which may seem in contradiction to my slow and conscientious method of work, of handing over in advance to the journals, the first finished chapters of a book. By this, I gain the absolute necessity of separating myself from my work, without further yielding to the tyrannous desire for perfection which makes an artist correct too much and re-

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commence ten, twenty, times the same page. I know some who thus exhaust themselves, and for years expend their energies without result, upon the same work; paralysing their real qualities and finally producing only what I may call "literature of the deaf," of which the beauties and niceties are at length appreciated only by themselves.

I gain also a spur to my natural indolence; the *lazzaronisme* of my race that causes me to detest long-continued efforts of attention or reflection, and which in me is accompanied by a horrible faculty for critical analysis. However, when once in the water, swim one must, and that is why I throw myself into it resolutely.

But what fears, what terrors ensue; and then the dread of falling ill, and the anguish of feeling that *feuilleton* with giant strides perpetually treading upon one's heels!

Jack was finished towards the end of October. I had taken nearly a year to write it. It is much the longest, and also the most quickly finished of any of my books. Thus

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it was that the completion of it left me in a state of prostration from which I went to recover, always accompanied by my two dear travelling companions, in the glorious sunshine of the Mediterranean coast, among the violets of Bordighera. There I spent days of positive mental convalescence, with the silences, the absorbed contemplation of nature, the delightful draughts of pure and reviving air, which follow a severe illness. On my return *Jack* was published by Dentu, in two thick volumes, and had not the same successful sale as *Fromont Jeune*. Two volumes to our French customs appear both long and dear. "A little too much paper about it, my boy," my good Flaubert, to whom it is dedicated, said to me, with his kind smile. I was reproached also with having too much insisted on the sufferings of the poor martyr. Georges Sand wrote to me that she rose from reading them with such a terrible heart-ache that "she remained three days without having been able to work." The impression must indeed have been vivid that could change the

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course of this courageous and imperturbable worker.

Yes! it is indeed a sad, bitter, cruel tale. But what is it after all compared with the ***real existence*** which I have just related.

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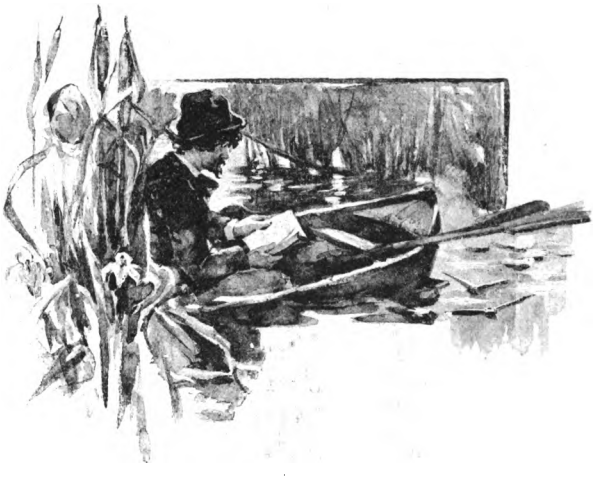

L'ÎLE DES MOINEAUX.

(SPARROW ISLAND.)

A Meeting on the Seine.

AT that time I did not suffer from rheumatism, and for six months of the year I worked in my boat. It was on a lovely bend of the river, about thirty miles above Paris, where the Seine is provincial, countrified, and fresh, where reeds and rushes, iris and water-lily, encroach upon its waters, and tufts of long grass and roots float about, on which the water wagtails, tired by flight, abandon themselves to the course of the stream. On the

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slopes of each bank, cornfields, squares of vineyard; here and there a few green islands dotted about;—l'île des Paveurs, l'île des Moineaux—this last quite small, a mere nosegay of brambles and straggling branches, which had become my favourite mooring-place. I used to push my dingy between the reeds, and when the soft rustling of the long slight canes had ceased and my wall was well closed in around me, I found myself in a tiny harbour of clearest water, hollowed under the shade of an old willow which served me as a study, the two oars crossed before me making a desk. I loved the smell of the river, the hum of the insects among the rushes, the murmur of the long quivering leaves, all that mysterious, infinite agitation which the silence of man awakes in nature! To how vast a multitude this silence brings happiness! To what millions of little beings is it reassuring! My islet was more populous than Paris. I heard busy creatures hunting and ferreting beneath the grass, the flight of birds pursuing each other through the branches, the shaking of damp feathers spread out to dry. No one paid any attention

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to me; they took me for an old willow. The black dragon-flies shot by under my nose, the water-flies bespattered me in their luminous leaps, the swallows came to drink actually beneath the oars.

One day, on penetrating into my island, I found my solitude invaded by a yellow beard and a straw hat. That was all I beheld at first,—a yellow beard and a straw hat. The intruder was not fishing; he lay at full length in his boat, his oars crossed like mine. He was working too, working in my study! At first sight both our faces expressed the same feeling of annoyance. Nevertheless we bowed. There was no help for it; the shadow cast by the willow was limited and our two boats touched. As he did not appear inclined to go away I settled myself without saying a word, but this hat with a beard to it so near to me disturbed my train of thought. Probably I too embarrassed him. Inaction made us speak. My boat was called *L'Arlésienne*, and the name of Georges Bizet served at once as a point of contact.

"You know Bizet? Are you by chance

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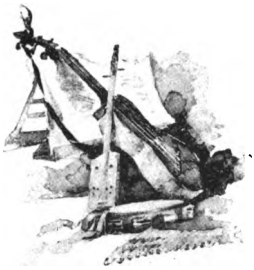
an artist?" The beard smiled and replied modestly,

"Sir, I am in the musical line."

Generally speaking, literary people have a horror of music. Gautier's opinion on "the most disagreeable of all noises" is well known; Leconte de Lisle and Banville share it. The moment a piano is opened Goncourt frowns. Zola has a vague impression that he once, in his youth, played some instrument, he no longer remembers what it was. That excellent Flaubert pretended to be a great musician, but it was only to please Tourguéneff, who in reality never cared for any music but that heard at the Viardots. As for me I love every kind madly—the classic, the simple, Beethoven, Gluck and Chopin, Massenet and Saint-Saëns, the *bamboula*, the *Faust* of Gounod and that of Berlioz, popular songs, grinding organs, the tambourine and even bells. Music that dances,



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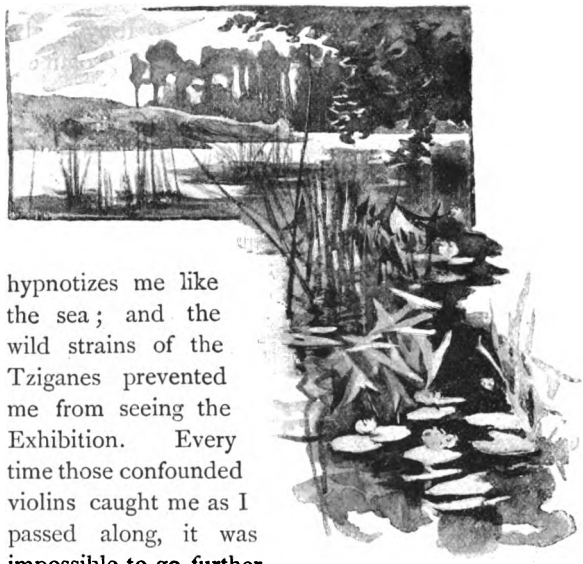
music that dreams, all speak to me, all awake an answering chord within me. The Wagnerian chant seizes me, envelops me,



hypnotizes me like the sea; and the wild strains of the Tziganes prevented me from seeing the Exhibition. Every time those confounded violins caught me as I passed along, it was impossible to go further. There I must remain till evening with a glass of Hungarian wine before me, a choking in the throat, eyes staring.

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and my whole body quivering to the nervous beat of the dulcimer.

This musician falling upon my islet won my heart. His name was Léon Pillaut. He had wit, ideas, a pretty imagination; we suited each other at once. Started by nearly the same things, our paradoxes made common cause. From this day, my island belonged to him as much as to me; and as his boat, a Norwegian craft without a keel, rolled horribly, he got into the habit of coming to talk of music in mine. His book—*Instruments et Musiciens*, which caused him to be named Professor at the Conservatoire—was already running in his head, and he used to relate it to me. We lived that book together.

I read between the lines of it the pleasant intimacy of our gossip, just as I used to see the Seine dancing between my reeds. Pillaut set forth to me absolutely new views upon his art. A talented musician, brought up in the country, his trained and delicate ear retained and noted all the varied sounds of nature; he heard as a landscape-painter sees. For him every flutter of wings gave its par-

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ticular thrill. The confused hum of insects, the dry rattle of autumn leaves, the babbling of the brooks over the pebbles, the wind, the rain, far-off voices, the distant rumble of the train, wheels creaking in the ruts—all this country life and being may be found in his book. And many other things too—ingenious criticisms, a pleasant and erratic erudition, the poetical biography of the orchestra and all instruments, from the amorous viola to the Saxony horn—all related for the first time. We talked of it beneath our willow or in some inn by the riverside, while we drank the muddy white wine of the year's vintage, and split a herring on the edge of a chipped plate in the midst of quarrymen and mariners; we talked of it as we pulled the oar, exploring the Seine and the unknown streamlets which fall into it.

Oh! what expeditions we made upon the pretty *Orge*, dappled with light, black with shade, tangled with scented cords of briar and climbers, as a brooklet of the tropics! We went straight on without knowing whither. Sometimes for a moment we passed between civilized lawns, whereon a white peacock

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trailed his tail, and bright-coloured dresses gleamed like flowers. A picture by Nittis. In the background, the house, all radiant with its galaxy of beauty, was shadowed by thick and lofty foliage, from which trilled forth the sonorous roulades and cheerful twittering of those cage birds kept by the rich. Further on we found again the wild flowers of our island, the straggling branches, the twisted and gnarled gray willows; or else some old windmill, tall as a round tower, with its moss-grown gallery, great walls with irregular loop-holes, and on the roof a crowd of pigeons and guinea fowl, amongst whom was a continual shiver and rustle of wings which seemed to be put in movement by the heavy machinery. Then came the return down stream with the current, singing old ditties! The screech of the peacock resounded on the deserted lawns; in the middle of a grass field stood the little cart of the shepherd, who was collecting his beasts from a distance to fold them for the night. We disturbed the kingfisher, the blue bird of the little streams; we bent ourselves double at the mouth of the *Orge* to pass beneath the low

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arch of the bridge, and then all at once the Seine opening out before us in the rolling mists, gave us the impression of the open sea.

Amid so many charming wanderings one above all is imprinted on my mind — an autumn breakfast at an inn by the waterside. I see again the chilly morning, the leaden, melancholy Seine, the landscape beautiful in its stillness, while low over the land lay a penetrating mist, which made us turn up the collars of our coats. The inn was a little above the lock at Coudray, an old posting-house, where the inhabitants of Corbeil are wont to spend a joyous Sunday, but which, out of the season, is only frequented by the people who use the lock—crews of the barges and tugs. At that moment the soup was smoking hot, ready for the passing of the gang. What a delicious puff of hot scent greeted us on entering. "And what after the beef, gentlemen? How would a stewed tench suit you?" That tench was exquisite, served up on a coarse earthenware plate in a little parlour, the wall-paper of which had a pleasant air of *bourgeois*

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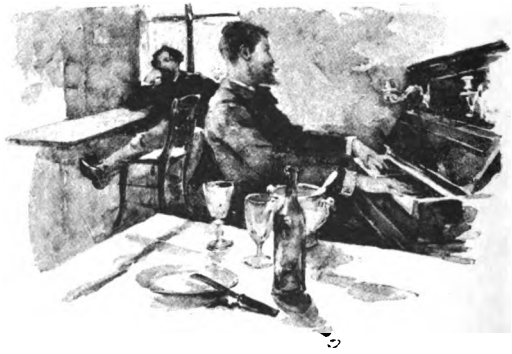
merry-making about it. The meal finished and pipes lighted, we began to talk of Mozart. It was truly an autumn conversation. Outside on the little terrace in front of the inn I could see through the leafless arbours a swing, painted green, a game of *tonneau*, the targets of a crossbow shooting-gallery, all shivering in the teeth of a cold wind off the Seine, and wearing the air of mournful sadness peculiar to abandoned pleasure haunts. "Ah, a spinet!" said my companion, lifting the dusty cover of a long table covered with plates. He tried the instrument, drew from it a few cracked and bleating sounds, and till evening closed we bemused ourselves delightfully with Mozart.



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FROMONT JEUNE ET RISLER AÎNÉ.

THE first idea of *Fromont Jeune* occurred to me during a grand rehearsal of *l'Arlésienne* at the Vaudeville Theatre. Before a magnificent scene of the Camargue, blazing under jets of gas to the very background, were unfolded the slow and rhythmical scenes of the pastoral, accompanied by ancient carols and antique marches, expressed in the charming music of Bizet. Seated before this impassioned fairy tale, that charmed my Southern

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heart, but which I divined to be somewhat too local, too slight in action, I said to myself that the Parisians would soon tire of hearing me talk of *cicalas*, of the daughters of Arles, of the mistral, and of my windmill; that it was time to interest them in some work which should speak of things nearer to them, to their every-day life in their own atmosphere; and as I then lived in the Marais, I naturally bethought me of placing my drama in the midst of the energetic labour of this mercantile quarter. The association tempted me: the son of a manufacturer myself, I was well acquainted with the inner workings of commercial collaboration, where similar interests draw together, for the business of a day, and sometimes for years, beings of the most various temperament and education. I knew well the jealousies between household and household, the bitter rivalry of the women, amongst whom castes exist and struggle far more than amongst men, and all the petty worries of a roof shared with others. At Nismes, Lyons, or Paris,—I had more models than enough, and all in my own family, and I began to think of this piece, of

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which the pivot of the action must be the mercantile value of the signature and the firm.

Unfortunately, whatever happens, there must be some passion in a play. Adultery, with all its dangers, its emotions, never fails to attract; and thus it is that the interest of my study is lessened and misplaced, being concentrated upon Sidonie and her adventures, when the association should be the principal interest; but I fully intend to return to this subject some day.

L'Arlésienne, as every one knows, was not a success. It was unreasonable to suppose that in the middle of the boulevard, in that coquettish corner of the Chaussée-d'Antin, right in the pathway of the fashions, the whims of the hour, the flashing and changing vortex of all Paris, any one could be interested in this drama of love, taking place in a farmyard in a plain of Camargue, full of the odour of well-plenished granaries and lavender in flower. It was a splendid failure; clothed in the prettiest music possible, with costumes of silk and velvet in the centre of comic-opera scenery. I came away dis-

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couraged and sickened, the silly laughter with which the emotional scenes were greeted still ringing in my ears; and without attempting to defend myself in the papers, where on all sides the attack was led against this play wanting in surprises, this painting in three acts, of manners and events of which I alone could appreciate the absolute fidelity, I resolved to write no more plays, and heaped one upon the other all the hostile notices as a rampart around my determination. *Fromont*, which was devised, thought out, almost to completion, appeared to me capable of transmutation into a novel. I ought then to have changed the setting of the intrigue, re-arranged the order and the gradation of the sentiments; but nothing is more difficult than to upset a piece of work where the fragments hold together in close assemblage and are completely fitted as a mosaic; nothing is more unwelcome than the voluntary destruction of conceptions long nursed in the mind and vivid in their melancholy. And the elements of the drama —I mean by this the drama such as I had imagined it, not as it was afterwards played

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—having served me for the groundwork of the novel, explains how the plot of *Fromont jeune* is a little conventional and romantic with types and surroundings strictly copied from nature.

Copied from nature!

I have never followed any other method. Just as painters carefully keep their albums full of sketches where the outlines, attitudes, foreshortenings and movements of the limbs are caught on the spur of the moment, so have I for the last thirty years, collected a quantity of memoranda, in which I have recorded my observations, my passing thoughts, sometimes jotted down in a few short words sufficient to recall a picture, an intonation, which later on I have enlarged upon and brought into harmony with the larger and more finished work. In Paris, during my travels, in the country, these notebooks have been carelessly scribbled in without a thought for the future work which was accumulating there; surnames are there too, which I have been unable to change, finding in their very sound a physiognomy, a living image of those who bore them. On the publication of some

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of my books there has often been an outcry and a talk of a "key" to my novels; some such thing has indeed been published, with a long list of celebrated personages, without reflecting that in my other works many real characters have also figured, unknown, it is true, and lost amongst the crowd where no one has sought for them.

Is it not the true way to write a novel, that is to say, the history of those folk who have no history? All the individuals in *Fromont* have lived or are still living. By my delineation of old Gardinois, I have grieved some one for whom I have a sincere affection, but I could not omit this specimen of a selfish and terrible old man, of the pitiless *parvenu*, who many a time from the terrace in his park threw his covetous glance over the large buildings of the farm and manor, the woods and the cascades; and said to his children assembled around him: "What consoles me in dying, is that after

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me not one of you will be rich enough to keep all this together." Planus, the cashier, was in real life called Scherer. I saw him in a banking-house in the rue de Londres, shaking his head in front of the well-filled

strong box, and muttering in a soft, tragi-comic manner and strong uncouth Teutonic accent: "*Fui, fui, te l'archent, peaucoup t'archent; mais chai bas gonvianze* ("Yes, yes, money, lots of money, but I've no faith in

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it). Sidonie also exists, and the poor home of her parents, and Mother Chèbe's little case of diamonds, stored away in a corner of the Empire chest of drawers, for so long the only bit of luxury belonging to the Chèbe household. Only Sidonie was not so vile as I have drawn her. Full of intrigue and ambition, her head turned with her unexpected fortune, intoxicated with pleasure and dress, she was however incapable of behaving badly in her own home, in the way I have described,—with a view to scenic effect. Madame Gardinois still flashes and twirls her rings in the same manner far away in the provinces; but she will never read this book. She never reads; her fingers are too busy. Risler is a recollection of my childhood. That tall fair man, designing patterns in a manufactory, was employed by my father. I made him Swiss instead of Alsatian, in order not to pander to any patriotic sentimentality and call forth an easily-won applause. Finally, Delobelle lived near to me, and more than a dozen times has said to me: "I have no right to leave the stage." In him I have, in order to complete the type, summed up all I knew about actors—their

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manias, the difficulty they find in resuming every-day life when they leave the boards, and in keeping their own individuality under so many different garbs. I have here, amongst old memoranda turned over while writing this book, a "Blessing of the Sea," recited by an actor, which is certainly one of the most extraordinary things possible. I cannot transcribe it here. It would be impossible for me to describe the rolling of eyes and voice, the maudlin emotion, the breathlessness, the quivering attitude of tremendous feeling that accompanied the delivery of this curious declamation, heard in the greenroom of the old Vaudeville theatre. Then again, I find in a notebook a sketch of the wonderful attitude of another Delobelle, contemplating his house, burnt down by the Prussians, rendering a very natural feeling of regret by gestures so inappropriate as to be absolutely comical; for it is the peculiarity of this class whose study it is to interpret life that they misunderstand everything and are never able to divest themselves of the conventional stage illusion, so devoid of light and shade. My mind was therefore well impregnated by the figure of Delobelle; but I had not yet con-

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ceived him as completed by his family, when about that time I assisted at the funeral of a great actor's daughter; there I beheld in a courtyard of the rue de Bondy the whole theatrical world; and all that I describe later on as taking placeat the death of little Désirée—the typical entrance of the guests, the play of their different shake hands, varied according to their habitual parts—the tear

wiped out of the corner of the eye and gazed at on the tip of the gloved finger. I immediately conceived the idea of giving Delobelle a daughter and I was desirous of describing that child as having inherited some of the oddity of the father, transforming the artistic irritability into the gentle sentimentality of the woman and the invalid. By reason even of this sickliness, and in contrast with it, I bestowed upon her a trade devoted solely to luxurious accessories. First, I made her a doll-dresser, in order that this humble and unfortunate girl might at least satisfy her

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delicate and elegant taste, and in default of herself, clothe her dreams in shreds of silk and gold tinsel. The work was essentially one of those practised in the buzzing, droning

Marais, in the old scutcheoned mansions and black five-storied houses in which are sheltered those who prepare the pleasures of

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Paris, letting fall in the dust of their garrets or on the wrought-iron railings of their staircases bits of gilding and chips of veneering woods. Go into those narrow alleys, climb up those melancholy stairs, through the half-opened doors on each landing, you will see women and children working round a wretched fire by the light of a petroleum lamp. A bit of wire, a little glue, gilt paper, and a few snips of velvet, are sufficient, notwithstanding poverty and cold, for them to create with their nimble fingers, almost without a tool, by sheer dexterity and ingenuity, those little trifles, "pretty and well-made," as the Boulevard street sellers say in offering their wares: clowns, dancing dolls, butterflies with wings that flutter, perfect marvels for twopence, toys for the poor, made by the poor, bearing the stamp of the delicate, childlike taste of this wonderful Parisian population.

In relating my book out loud, as is my custom while mentally evolving it, I mentioned one day to André Gill, the sketcher of outlines, who was in all respects an artist, the little Delobelle and the manner in which I was describing her; and he warned me that in one of Dickens's novels, till then

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unknown to me, *Our Mutual Friend*, there was exactly the same account of an infirm girl, a doll dresser; described with the deep tender sentiment for the poor, the imaginative feeling for the street, which is so palpable in the great English novelist. I remembered how often I had been compared to Dickens, even long before a friend had, on returning from a journey in England, informed me of the sympathy existing between *David Copperfield* and *Le Petit Chose*. An author who conscientiously records what he sees, can make no answer to such a criticism, except that there are certain affinities of the mind for which one is not responsible, but that on the day of the great creation of men and novelists, nature in a fit of abstraction may have mixed her materials. I feel in my heart, the love that Dickens felt for the unfortunate and the poor, and for childhoods spent in the wretchedness of large cities; like him, I began life in a heart-rending manner, obliged to gain my daily bread before I was sixteen years of age; in that lies, I believe, our greatest resemblance. Nevertheless, my conversation with Gill threw me into a state of despair, and, giving

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up doll dressing, I strove to find some other trade for the little Delobelle. Such things are not however easily invented; and then, how should I be able to discover so practical an imaginary profession as that of doll dresser, showing all I meant to portray; the exquisite grace in the wretched existence, the smiling dream under the dingy roof, the nimble fingers embodying the winged inspirations. Ah, how many of those sombre houses did I not search through, how many cold stairs, with their rope bannisters did I not climb that year, while seeking for my ideal home among the numberless paltry little manufactories. At last I almost despaired; but my obstinacy found its reward. One day, rue du Temple, on a leathern placard, in one of those frames on which for the convenience of purchasers are written and advertised all the trades carried on in the house, I read in faded gilt letters which nevertheless dazzled me:

BIRDS AND FLIES FOR BONNETS.

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THE habit I have already mentioned of relating my books aloud, is with me a process of my work. To explain to others my subject elucidates it to myself, I become more deeply imbued with it; experiment upon my listeners what parts will tell, and the conversation brings me new ideas—godsends, which, thanks to my excellent memory, I am able to retain. Woe betide the luckless caller who rashly intrudes on my feverish creation! I continue mercilessly in his presence talking instead of writing, putting together anyhow, so that they may be somewhat intelligible to him, the different parts of my novel; and in spite of the bored and absent looks with which he tries to fly from my superabundant improvisation, I build up my chapter and develop it in words. In Paris, in my study, in the country, in my strolls through the green meadows, and out boating, how many of my comrades have I not thus tired out, while they little guessed their part of silent collaboration. But my wife has had to bear the greater part of this repetition of outspoken work, of subjects thought over and over twenty times running. "How do you

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think it would do to make Sidonie die? Shall I let Risler live? What must Delobelle or Frantz or Claire say in such and such a circumstance?" It went on from morning till night, at each instant of the day, at meals, on our way to the theatre, on our return home from parties, during those long cab journeyings through the silence and slumber of Paris. Ah, the poor wives of writers! True, mine is such an artist herself, and has taken such a part in all I have written! Not a page she has not looked over, touched up, on which she has not thrown a dash of her fine azure and gold-dust. And withal so modest, so simple, so little of a blue-stocking. I expressed all this one day, and rendered homage to all her tender and indefatigable aid in a few dedicatory lines of the *Nabab;* but my wife would not allow it to be printed, and I only left it on a dozen copies given to intimate friends, now very scarce, which I recommend to connoisseurs.

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My method of work is known. All my notes being jotted down, my chapters in good order and well divided, my personages

thoroughly alive in my mind, I begin to work quickly, rapidly. I dash down ideas and events without allowing myself time for

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proper or exact wording even, the subject hurrying me on, swamping both details and characters. The page covered, I hand it to my collaborator; I look it over again afterwards; then at last I re-copy it; and with what joy!—the joy of a schoolboy who has finished his task, touching up some phrases, completing, refining them; it is the best period of work. *Fromont* was thus written in one of the oldest palaces of the Marais, where my study, with its large light windows, looked out on the fresh green and the darkened trellis of a garden. But beyond that zone of calm and of piping birds lay the working life of the faubourgs, the straight smoke of the factories, the rumble of the vans, and I still hear on the pavement of a neighbouring yard the rattle of a little hand-cart, which at the moment of New Year's gifts dragged about children's drums from early morn till seven o'clock at night. There is nothing more healthy, more exciting than working in the very atmosphere of one's subject, in the centre in which one's own personages are living. The noise of the workmen entering and leaving the mills, the

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call-bells of the factories, ran through my pages at fixed hours. No effort was required to find the local colour, the ambient air; I was invaded by it. The whole surroundings helped me, carried me away, worked for me. At the two extremities of the large room stood my long table and my wife's little writing-bureau, and running to and fro, carrying the sheets from one to the other, my son, now a medical student, then a child with thick fair locks falling over his little pinafore, black with the ink of his first up-and-down strokes. It is one of the happiest recollections in my author existence.

Sometimes, however, I required some more distant detail, an observation noted down in some special place; then all the family would start off in search of the impression. I dined with my wife and child in the Palais Royal, the very dinner Risler and Sigismond dined after they were ruined, at the hour when the military music was playing, when the straw chairs placed in circles, the tired attitudes of the people listening, even the dripping of the fountains on the dust of a hot summer's evening, threw out

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a peculiar melancholy; an emptiness, the provincialism of Paris in summer time. I felt thoroughly impregnated by it, and, wrapped up in my subject, stirred by the

hackneyed military music, I fancied it softly accompanying the mournful conversation of my two unhappy heroes. The death of Risler necessitated a still longer expedition; I had in my mind a little house of the editor

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Poulet-Malassis, far away near the fortifications, and I had settled Planus there in front of green slopes, with yellow flowers scattered and trodden down by the Sunday excursionists. It became necessary to revisit that country, to follow Risler step by step, from the threshold of the house to the dark

archway, where he was to hang himself, close to those barracks, from whence one can behold Paris, as it may be seen from the suburbs: a smoky mass of tightly packed cupolas, steeples and roofs, with a perspective like that of an immense harbour, of which the chimneys might be the masts. Hence-

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forth I had the outline of all my chapters. I had but to write; and under these conditions, the drama pictured, illustrated, I may say, by my recollections and my walks, the work was already half done.

Fromont jeune et Risler aîné appeared in *feuilletons* in the *Bien Public*, and during its publication I felt, for the first time, that my work awoke the serious interest of the public. Claire and Désirée found friends; I was reproached with the death of Risler, and I received letters interceding for the little lame girl. Life offers nothing better than this dawn of popularity, this first intimacy of the reader and the author.

The book was published by Charpentier, who had just moved into a bright apartment full of sunshine, on the Quai du Louvre, a charming and friendly home which has become a regular literary *rendezvous*. It was on leaving him, after one of the last evenings of the season, towards the month of May, that a perfectly clear vision of the death scene of Désirée Delobelle occurred to me, as I walked through the rows of flowers ready for the morrow's market, while

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before me lay the Seine, all starred with reflections of the gas lamps.

The successful sale of the book astonished me much. Accepted until then only by a small artistic group, I had never dreamt of any great popularity, and I well recall my delighted surprise at the announcement of a second edition which greeted me when, some days after the publication of my book, I came in fear and trembling to ask for news of it.

Soon reprints succeeded each other rapidly; then came a demand for translation from Italy, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, from England too, but last of all. It is the country in which I have most slowly made my way, and yet the one in which it would have seemed that my choice of homely subjects would have been most likely to attract and please.

One more detail.

At that time we used to have at Gustave Flaubert's Sunday meetings, which by degrees made of a little group of writers, united by their respect and zeal for literature, a group of true friends. We met in a suite of tiny rooms in the rue Murillo, overlooking the carefully trimmed clumps of shrubs, and the

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sham ruins of the Parc Monceau. Within, was the quiet of a private house opening on to a park, and a freedom of artistic talk which gave me pleasure of the highest and most refined sort. The party was composed of four of us, or perhaps five when Tourguéneff was free from the gout, and the dinner which brought us together every month was boldly called "the dinner of unsuccessful authors;" at it we cursed the indifference of the age to literature, and the timid reception given by the public to any new departure. The fact is, not one of us had the good luck to catch the ear of this terrible public.

Flaubert was undergoing the melancholy attendant on past success, drunk to the very dregs, even to the reproaches of the critics and the masses, always holding up the first work as a standard, making of *Madame Bovary* a glorious obstacle to the renown of *Salammbô* or the *Education sentimentale.* Goncourt seemed tired out, disheartened by a strenuous effort which would profit a whole fresh generation of novelists, and would leave him, the instigator of it—or at least he thought this would be the case—almost unknown.

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Suddenly I found myself the only one of the party who could feel that fashion had turned towards him, with several thousand copies to prove the fact; and I was quite embarrassed by it, almost ashamed indeed, in the company of writers of such merit. Each Sunday when I arrived they would ask, "Well, and how about the editions? What number have you got to now?" Each time I had to acknowledge fresh reprints; honestly, I did not know where to hide myself and my success. "Our books will never sell," Zola would say, without envy, but somewhat sadly.

It is twelve years since then. Now his novels run to a hundred editions; those of Goncourt are in every hand, and I smile when that plaintive and resigned accent recurs to me, "Our books will never sell."

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TOURGUÉNEFF.

THE time is ten or twelve years ago, the scene Gustave Flaubert's home in the rue Murillo. The coquettish little rooms, hung with Oriental materials, opened upon the Park Monceau, that trim and aristocratic garden which held up a blind of greenery before the windows. There we met every Sunday, five or six of us, always the same, in a delightful intimacy. Strangers and bores were rigidly excluded.

One Sunday, when I came as usual to meet the old master and the expected friends, Flaubert seized upon me the moment I entered.

"You do not know Tourguéneff? There he is."

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And without waiting for an answer he pushed me into the drawing-room. On a divan lounged a tall old man with a snow-white beard, who as I entered raised and uncoiled himself like a boa-constrictor with great astonished eyes from the pile of cushions.

It must be owned that we French live in extraordinary ignorance of all foreign literature. Our minds are as stay-at-home as our bodies, and with a horror of travel amidst the unknown, we read no better than we colonise, when we are taken out of our own country. As it happened, I knew Tourguéneff's writings well. I had read with the deepest interest the *Mémoires d'un Seigneur Russe*, and the study of this book had led me on to the knowledge of others. We had a link to bind us together, even before we became personally acquainted, in our common love of cornfields, of forest thickets, of nature in short—a twin comprehension of its penetrating charm.

Generally speaking, descriptive writers have only eyes, and are content to paint what they see ; Tourguéneff besides can smell and hear. All his senses have doors opening upon each

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other. He is overflowing with country scents, the noise of streams, clear skies, and allows himself to be lulled, without reference to any school, by the orchestra of his own sensations.

This music does not reach all ears. The denizens of cities, deafened from childhood by the roar of great towns, never perceive it. They fail to hear the voices which speak in the so-called silence of the woods, when nature fancies herself alone, and when man, holding his peace, has succeeded in being forgotten. Can you recall to yourself the splash of oars from a far-distant boat that you have heard in fancy on some lake of Fenimore Cooper's? The boat is miles away, far beyond the range of vision; but the woods seem to become the vaster for this far-off sound vibrating on the still waters, and we feel the thrill of solitude.

It was the Steppes of Russia that brought the heart and senses of Tourguéneff to blossoming point. One becomes good by listening to nature, and those who love her do not lose their interest in mankind. Hence that sympathetic gentleness, sad as a moujik's

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song, which seems to sob in the background of all Slave story-tellers' tales. It is the sigh of humanity spoken of in the creole song, the valve which saves mankind from suffocation: "*Si pas té gagné, soupi n'en mouné, mouné t'a touffé.*" And it is this sigh constantly repeated which makes the *Mémoires d'un Seigneur Russe* a second *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, minus shrieks and declamations.

I knew all this when I met Tourguéneff. For a long time he had reigned in my Olympus on an ivory throne among the ranks of my deities. But far from suspecting his presence in Paris I had never even asked myself whether he were dead or alive. Imagine my astonishment when I found myself face to face with him in a Parisian drawing-room on the third floor looking on to the Parc Monceau.

I told him all this lightly and expressed my admiration for him. I told him, too, how I had read him in the woods of Sénart. There his spirit was so well in unison with the surroundings; and the balmy remembrances of the landscape and of his books were so intermingled that more than one of his stories

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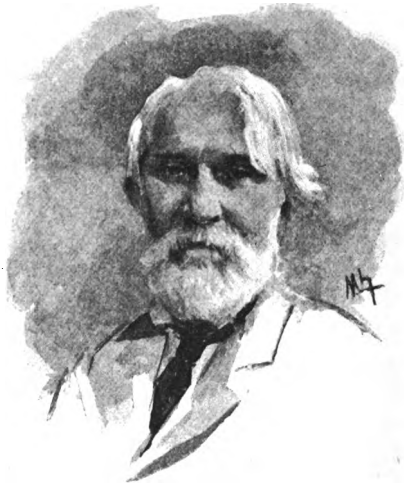
was represented in my thoughts by the colour of a little patch of pink heather already faded by autumn.



Tourguéneff could not hide his astonishment.

"What! you have really read me?"

Then he gave me some particulars as to the small sale of his books, and the obscurity of his name in France. Hetzel had pub-

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lished for him almost as a charity. His popularity had not gone beyond the frontier. It hurt him to live unknown in a country for which he had an affection, and he confessed his mortifications a little sadly, but without any bitterness. On the contrary our disasters of 1870 had only increased his attachment to France. He could no longer bear to quit it. Before the war he used to spend his summers at Baden, now he would no longer go there, but contented himself with Bougival and the banks of the Seine.

It happened on this particular Sunday that there was no one else at Flaubert's, and our *tête-à-tête* was prolonged. I questioned the writer upon his method of working and expressed my surprise that he did not make his own translations, for he spoke excellent French—a shade slowly, to give time for the subtle play of his mind.

He owned to me that the Académie and its Dictionary frightened him. He turned the leaves of that formidable dictionary in fear and trembling, as if it were a code wherein were formulated the laws of words and the penalties incurred for any hardihood

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of expression. He emerged from these researches with a conscience pricked by literary scruples, which killed all energy and disheartened him for further attempts. I remember that in a novel he wrote about this time he did not venture to risk the phrase, "*ses yeux pâles*," through fear of the *Forty* and their definition of the epithet.

It was not the first time I had met with such anxieties. I had already found them in my friend Mistral, who was also spellbound by the cupola of the Institute, that ridiculous monument, a medallion of which adorns the covers of the Didot edition

On this subject, I set forth to Tourguéneff what I had so much at heart: that the French tongue is not a dead language, to be written with a dictionary of definite expressions, classified as in a Gradus. For myself, I felt it to be instinct with life, a grand river rolling along with a powerful and scouring current, full to the very brink. The river indeed picks up much dross by the way, for everything is thrown into it, but let it flow on, and it may be trusted to make its own selection.

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Then, as the day wore on, Tourguéneff observed that he must join "the ladies," at the Pasdeloup Concert, and I came away with him. I was delighted to find that he loved music. In France, literary men in general have a horror of it, painting having usurped its place. Théophile Gautier, Saint-Victor, Hugo, Banville, Goncourt, Zola, Leconte de Lisle, are all music haters. To the best of my belief, I am the first to confess aloud an ignorance of colour, and a passion for music; no doubt this arises from my meridional temperament, and from my short sight, one sense has developed at the expense of the other. With Tourguéneff the taste for music had been part of his Parisian education. He had absorbed it from the surroundings in which he lived.

These surroundings had been formed by an intimacy of thirty years' standing, with Madame Viardot, Viardot, the great singer, Viardot-Garcia, sister to Malibran. A bachelor, and very lonely, Tourguéneff had lived for years in the family mansion, 50 rue de Douai.

"The ladies" of whom he had spoken

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to me at Flaubert's, were Madame Viardot and her daughters whom he loved as his own children. It was in this hospitable dwelling that I visited him.

The house was furnished with refined luxury, and a great attention alike to art and to comfort. In crossing the hall, I saw

through an open door, a gallery of paintings. Fresh voices of young girls came to me through the hangings, and alternating with them was the sympathetic and powerful contralto of *Orphée*, which filled the staircase and ascended with me.

Up stairs, on the third floor, was a snug

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little room, crowded as a boudoir, with soft and comfortable furniture. Tourguéneff had borrowed from his friends their artistic tastes; music from the wife, painting from the husband.

He was lying on a sofa.

I sat down by him, and we at once resumed the conversation begun a few days previously.

He had been struck with my remarks, and promised to bring to Flaubert's on the following Sunday, a story which should be translated under his own superintendence. Then he talked to me of a book he wished to write, *Les Terres Vierges*, a sombre picture of the new classes seething in the depths of Russia, the history of those poor *simplifiés*, pushed by a heartrending misunderstanding into the arms of the people. The people do not understand them, but repulse and jeer at them. And while he spoke I reflected that Russia is indeed a virgin land, an inchoate country, scarcely yet more than a marsh, whereon every footstep leaves its print, a country where all is new, all to be done, all to be explored. With us, on the

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contrary, there is no longer even a deserted avenue, a pathway that has not been trodden underfoot by the crowd; and to speak only of the novel writer's art, the ghost of Balzac appears at the end of every alley.

After this interview our meetings became frequent. Amongst all the hours spent together I have a vivid impression of a spring afternoon, a Sunday in the rue Murillo, which stands out in my recollections unique and luminous. We had spoken of Goethe, and Tourguéneff had said to us, "You know nothing about him." The following Sunday, he brought *Prometheus* and the *Satyr*, that Voltairian tale, impious and rebellious, expanded by Goethe into a dramatic poem. From the Parc Monceau came to us the cries and shouts of children, the clear sunshine, the freshness of the well-watered lawns, and we four—Goncourt, Zola, Flaubert, and myself—moved by this magnificent improvisation, listened to genius interpreted by genius. This man, who trembled when pen in hand, had, as he stood there, all the splendid audacities of the poet; it was not the misleading translation which curdles

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and petrifies, but Goethe himself living and speaking to us.

Often too, Tourguéneff would come to seek me in the heart of the Marais, in the old hotel Henri II., where I then dwelt. He was amused with the strange sight presented by the great courtyard, the royal dwelling with its gable ends and *mashrabeyahs* filled with the petty industries of Parisian trade—manufacturers of tops, of seltzer-water and sugar-plums. One day, when he arrived—a colossal figure—arm-in-arm with Flaubert, my little boy said to me in a whisper, "Why, they are giants!" Yes, giants they were, excellent giants, with great brains and great hearts proportionate to their appearance. There was a link, an affinity of simple goodness between these two genial natures. It was Georges Sand who had united them. Flaubert, boaster and fault-finder, a Don Quixote with the voice of a trumpeter of the Guards, and his powerful irony of observation, his manners of a Norman of the Conqueror's time, was certainly the masculine half of this marriage of minds; but who would have guessed that

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in this other Colossus, with bushy eyebrows and immense flat cheekbones, was the feminine element; the woman of acute delicacy described by Tourguéneff in his books; that nervous, languid, passionate Russian, sleepy as an Oriental, tragic as a nation in revolt? So true is it that in the vast confusion of the manufacture of humanity souls occasionally mistake their proper envelopes, and men's souls may find their way to women's bodies, while the souls of women may chance into the carcases of cyclops.

It was at this date that the idea of a monthly meeting, at which friends should assemble at a good dinner, occurred to us. It was to be called "the Flaubert dinner," or "dinner of unsuccessful authors." Flaubert was to be admitted, on the strength of a slight check with his *Candidat;* Zola on account of *Bouton de Rose;* Goncourt for *Henriette Maréchal;* myself for my *Arlésienne.* Girardin wished to insinuate himself into our band, but he was not a literary man, and we refused him admittance. As for Tourguéneff, he gave us his word of honour he had been damned in Russia, and

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as it was so far off no one went thither to ascertain the fact. Nothing could be more delightful than these friendly dinners, where we talked in perfect freedom, elbows on table, our minds thoroughly roused to action. As experienced people should be, we were all *gourmets*, and so there were as many pet dishes as there were temperaments; as many different recipes as there were provinces. Flaubert must have Normandy butter and stewed Rouen ducks; Edmond de Goncourt, exotic and refined, demanded preserved ginger; Zola, sea-urchins and cockles; while Tourguéneff enjoyed his caviare.

Ah! we were not easy to provide for, and the restaurants of Paris no doubt remember us. We often changed our meeting-place. Sometimes it was at Adolphe and Pelé, behind the Opera; sometimes in the square of the Opera Comique; then at Voisin's, whose cellar could meet any emergency and reconcile all tastes. We were wont to sit down to table at seven o'clock, and at two o'clock we had not finished. Flaubert and Zola dined in their shirt-sleeves; Tourguéneff lounged on the divan;

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the waiters were turned out—a needless precaution, since Flaubert's "roar" could be heard from roof to cellar of the house —and we talked literature. There was always on the table a book by one or other of us at any rate, just out. It might be the *Tentation de Saint-Antoine* and the *Trois*

Contes of Flaubert; *La Fille Elisa* of Goncourt; *L'Abbé Mouret* of Zola; Tourguéneff brought *Reliques Vivantes* and *Terres Vièrges;* and I, *Fromont* or *Jack.* We opened our minds to one another without flattery and without any conspiracy of mutual admiration.

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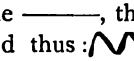
I have here before me a letter of Torguéneff's, the handwriting large, foreign, ancient in appearance, a writing of old manuscript; and this letter I transcribe in its entirety, for it well describes the tone of sincerity prevailing amongst us:

"*Monday.* 24 *May* '77.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"If I have not yet spoken to you about your book, it is because I wished to do so at length, and would not content myself with a few commonplace phrases. I postpone it all till our meeting, which will soon take place now, I hope, since Flaubert will soon return and our dinners will recommence.

"I will confine myself to saying one thing: the *Nabab* is the most remarkable and also the most unequal book you have written. If *Fromont* and *Risler* were represented by a straight line ———, the *Nabab* would have to be figured thus:  , and the heights of the zigzags could only be reached by a talent of the first order.

"I beg your pardon for expressing myself so geometrically.

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"I have had a long and very violent attack of gout. I only went out yesterday for the first time; and I have the legs and knees of an old man of ninety. I much fear I am become what the English call 'a confirmed invalid.'

"A thousand kind regards to Madame Daudet, and with a warm shake hands,

"I am,

"Yours ever,

"IVAN TOURGUÉNEFF."

When we had done with the books and the chief interests of the moment, the conversation became more general, and we returned to the ever-present themes and ideas of love and death.

The Russian stretched out on his sofa said not a word.

"And you, Tourguéneff?"

"Oh, I never think about death. In our country no one has any very distinct idea on the subject; it is a vague, distant notion, enveloped in the Slavonic mist."

That word revealed the whole temperament of his race and of his own genius. The

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Slavonic mist floats over all his handiwork, softening it, throwing a hazy vapour over all; even his conversations seeming pervaded by it. What he related was hesitatingly and laboriously begun; then all at once some clear and incisive word dispelled the clouds as by a flash of light. He described his Russia to us, not the historical and stereotyped Russia of the Bérésina, but a summer-like Russia, speaking of ripe cornfields and tender blossoms springing up under the April showers; *Little Russia*, full of the fresh budding forth of nature, of green grass sprouting up, and the hum of the busy bees. And so, as we are wont to devise some kind of local habitation, to imagine some already-known landscape as the setting in which to frame the exotic stories we may hear, Russian life appeared to me through his narrative as a vast manorial existence, placed in an Algerian country with a surrounding of Arab encampments.

Tourguéneff talked to us of the Russian peasant: of his inveterate drunkenness, his benumbed conscience, his ignorance of liberty; or else he would describe some brighter

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scene, some charming idyl, some tender recollections, such as that of a miller's daughter whom he had met while on a shooting expedition, and with whom he had for a while fancied himself in love.

"What shall I give you?" he had often asked her; and the pretty maid had answered blushingly,

"Bring me some scented soap from the city that I may perfume my hands, and then you will kiss them as you do those of the fine ladies."

After love and death we talked of illnesses, of the slavery in which we drag about with us our wretched bodies, like the convict's cannon-ball at the end of his chain. The sad confessions in fact of men past their fortieth year! As for me, not yet a victim to rheumatism, I laughed at my friends, at poor Tourguéneff, who was a martyr to gout and who came limping to our dinners. Since then I have changed my tone.

Alas! death of which we were always speaking soon came. First Flaubert was taken. He was the soul, the link which bound us together. Once he was gone our

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life changed, and we only met from time to time, none of us having the courage to resume the meetings so sadly interrupted by mourning.

Some months later, Tourguéneff endeavoured to bring us together again; Flaubert's empty place was to be kept at our table, but his loud voice and hearty laugh were too sadly missing. They were no longer the dinners of former days. Since then I have met the great Russian novelist at an evening party at Madame Adams's; he had brought with him the Grand Duke Constantine, who on his way through Paris was anxious to meet a few of the celebrities of the day—a kind of living and eating Tussaud's exhibition. Tourguéneff was ill and depressed. His pitiless enemy the gout constantly confined him to his bed, and he begged his friends to come and visit him.

I saw him for the last time two months ago. The house was still full of flowers, of fresh voices down stairs, while up stairs my poor friend lay stretched out upon his sofa sadly changed and weakened. He was suffering acutely from an attack of *angina*

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pectoris, and from a wound caused by the excision of a tumour. The operation having been perfomed without the aid of chloroform, he gave me a painfully lucid account of it. First came a circular sensation, like that of peeling a fruit, then the sharp pain of cutting into the quick. He added :

"I analysed my sufferings, in order to describe them to you at one of our dinners, thinking you might find it interesting."

As he could still drag himself about a little he came down stairs to accompany me as far as the door. We entered his picture-gallery, and he showed me some paintings of the Russian school—a Cossack camp, waving cornfields, and glowing Russian landscapes, such as he described them.

Old Viardot was there; he also seemed ill. In the next room Garcia was singing, and Tourguéneff, surrounded by the artistic associations he loved so well, smiled as he bid me good-bye.

A month later I heard that Viardot was dead and that Tourguéneff was dying. I could not believe this. It seemed to me that as long as a beautiful and powerful

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mind had not yet said its last word life must surely be prolonged for it. Fine weather and the balmy air of Bougival would give Tourguéneff back to us, but the friendly gatherings he so loved to attend were at an end for him.

Ah, those Flaubert dinners! We began them again the other day; there were only three of us![1]

While I am correcting the proofs of this article, which appeared a few years since, a book of *Souvenirs* is brought to me, in which Tourguéneff from the other side of the grave criticizes me without mercy. As an author, I am beneath all criticism; as a man, I am the lowest of my kind. My friends were well aware of it, and told fine stories about me. What friends did Tourguéneff allude to, and could they remain my friends if they held such an opinion of me? And himself, that excellent Slave, who obliged him to assume so cordial a manner with me? I can see him in my house, at my

[1] Written for the New York *Century Magazine* in 1880.

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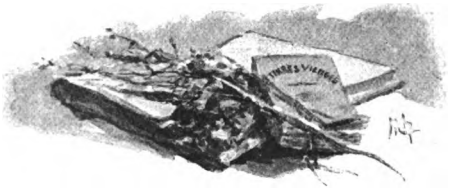
table, gentle, affectionate, kissing my children. I have in my possession many exquisite warm-hearted letters from him. And this was what lay concealed behind that kindly smile. Good heavens! how strange life is, and how true that charming word of the Greek language, EIRÔNEIA.



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